

SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 21

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 JUNE 2008

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

MORE DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT

For almost four years we at VUFT have been attempting to bring attention to the wrongs being perpetrated against our serving military and veterans. It is not that the stories haven't been out there, rather it is that some are hidden, and very few pay attention.

Every fifteen days in this newsletter we try to uncover some of the lesser-told stories, and we try to put associated stories together to expose some normally hidden contradiction or hypocrisy.

Let's talk about some of the things that we old soldiers are doing to try to right some of these wrongs. Please forgive me for the collective "soldier"; it's the easiest way to refer to all soldiers, sailors and airmen. I don't like the term "warrior" because it's ancient position as an honorific has been sullied by equating it with "berserker"; we are not that kind of soldier, nor are most of those serving today.

We have been good soldiers, fighting the fight hard, when the odds are really stacked against us. Most of us who are active in the organization are retired or former regular members of the various services, but our efforts have been focused on the plight of both the part-time soldiers and the regulars in the current era.

Being good soldiers, we have tried hard to have an effect within the system. We concentrated on appeals to sitting legislators and government officials. We have proposed and had sponsored legislation voted on, passed and then vetoed. We have written to the civilian leadership in the Department of Defense, only to find out from them that they are doing "a heckuva job".

After several years of such activity with very little response – not even acknowledgement of the correspondence, let alone recognition of the problem – we decided that there was another way. If the checks and balances of the Constitution were not going to be used by the current Executive and Legislative leaders, then we sure as hell could try it.

When we were given the opportunity to join in the lawsuit against the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Justice, we signed on. This was not that easy a choice.

There is some inherent feeling in all present and former military that using the courts to get the people in your own profession to do their job is not a very soldierly thing to do. That feeling goes right along with the one experienced by many of us that making a claim against the government is somehow whining.

We have to get over all of that.

This lawsuit isn't about getting what's "owed" to a few million veterans. It isn't even about what's "fair". No, this suit is much larger than that.

This suit is about the obligations that 300 million Americans have for our country and its soldiers. This suit is about the Constitutional necessity for all branches of our government to perform as we and our representatives have told them to do in the laws.

This lawsuit is not some cry for cash, as so many are; there are no monetary damages being asked for. Rather, it is a cry for honor – it is a cry for dignity – it is a cry for performance by those public servants whose salaries we pay.

Through this lawsuit we have found our way to get the big kids' attention. We have sounded our battle cry. "You can no longer hide from your legal, moral and ethical obligations. Where you succeed we will praise you, but where you fail we will tell the truth to America."

We have told those who cower in their ivory towers that we will serve when called upon, but you had better be sure that we are truly needed and that fighting, killing and destroying is the only answer.

We have put them on notice that when we go to fight and then come home we have earned something far beyond a good day's pay.

We have put our lives on hold for you. We have bled and died for you. We have sacrificed our physical and mental health for you.

We have left our families behind while you stayed home with yours. Our families have grieved while your families played. Our families have suffered while yours prospered. Your children pursued their careers, while our sons and daughters put their careers on hold.

We have hurt others in your name and we want to know that what we did was not only right, but honorable. We have served with dignity – have you done as much?

We will lead in this fight and others will follow, because it is inherent in the American fighting man that he honors not the flag, or the commander so much as the nation that those symbols and persons stand for.

Even old communists know truth when they see it:

"Whenever death may surprise us, let it be welcome if our battle cry has reached even one receptive ear and another hand reaches out to take up our arms."

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara

It will be a long fight; the war of neglect against veterans and their families has gone on for a long time. Much needs to be righted. Join us on the front lines! Take up the sword and sound the battle cry! [Ed.]

SPECIAL APPEAL

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

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

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

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

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER WANTS TO CONTACT PRESENT AND FORMER ARMY PERSONNEL ABOUT ARMY EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM. CAN YOU HELP?

I'm working on a news project about Army Emergency Relief (the semi-official relief fund of the Army): how it operates, its strengths, its failings. The idea grew out of the first project. I'm hoping you can help me reach soldiers, veterans or families who have ANY experience at all with AER.

Most soldiers have heard of it or were asked to contribute to it at some point. They may have asked for help and gotten it - or not gotten it. They may have contributed to it - or chosen not to. They may have helped run a fundraising campaign for it. I'm interested in all of that. I don't care if they think AER is great or terrible. I'd like to hear what everyone has to say.

[My] email address is donn@ap.org and phone number 617-316-9253.

Jeff Donn, Associated Press

“FIGHT OR DIE” WILL PREMIERE ON THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL ON THURSDAY, JUNE 26 AT 10PM EDT/PDT. AND JUNE 27TH 2AM

From Executive Producer Randall Wallace (BRAVEHEART, PEARL HARBOR, WE WERE SOLDIERS, THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK), comes FIGHT OR DIE, an exciting new epic documentary special that captures the personal experience of war in groundbreaking fashion by delving inside the psyche of the soldier under fire, allowing viewers to walk the Thin Red Line that separates sanity from madness and the living from the dead.

...The first episode tells the real-life story of a group of American soldiers whose lives were made famous in Wallace's motion picture WE WERE SOLDIERS starring Mel Gibson. On November 14, 1965 in the Ia Drang Valley of Vietnam, in a small clearing called Landing Zone X-Ray, 2,000 enemy soldiers surrounded 400 United States Army troopers. The ensuing battle was one of the most savage in U.S. history. FIGHT OR DIE is a tribute to the nobility of those men under fire, their common acts of uncommon valor, and their loyalty to and love for one another. <http://dsc.discovery.com/tv-schedules/special.html?paid=1.14951.25467.0.0>

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court's bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

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

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

THE FIGHT CONTINUES!

VETERANS GROUPS WIN ROUND IN FEDERAL COURT IN LAWSUIT AGAINST VA

Jason Leopold - The Public Record - Tuesday, June 10, 2008

A federal court judge sided with two veterans advocacy groups suing the Veterans Administration Tuesday, agreeing to add to evidence an explosive email written by a VA official that suggested counselors consider diagnosing war veterans who show signs of post traumatic stress disorder with a less serious condition.

... The groups want a judge to issue a preliminary injunction to force the VA to immediately treat veterans who show signs of PTSD and are at risk of suicide. Attorneys representing both organizations asked the judge to reopen their case and consider admitting Perez's email into evidence after another veterans group publicly disclosed it last month.

... "It was an honest mistake by a junior staff member," [DVA attorney] Bensing told the judge. "There really is nothing more to this matter. We submit that it should have no effect on this case."

[Judge Samuel] Conti was not swayed. He admitted the document into evidence, which is expected to have an impact on his ruling. <More at: www.pubrecord.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=118&Itemid=9>

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

More articles available at:

New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/24/opinion/24herbert.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

LA Times: http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-gisuicide15-2008jun15_04012826.story

Columbus Ledger-Inquirer: <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/story/335485.html>

TV Station KSBY: www.ksby.com/global/story.asp?s=8458639

Fog City Journal: www.fogcityjournal.com/wordpress/2008/06/11/federal-judge-accepts-perez-anti-ptsd-email-senate-testimony-into-evidence/print/

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

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

WE REALLY NEED YOUR HELP

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

All donations are tax deductible to the donor.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

Thank you for standing up against the very arrogant VA.

Floyd Caldwell, Brawley, CA

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

HOUSE EXAMINES VA-DOD PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENTS FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS

June 11, 2008

Washington, D.C. — Today, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing on the implementation of the wounded warrior provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008.

"Over the past fifteen years, one commission and task force after another has called for measures to streamline the transition from military to civilian life, but such changes have not been implemented," Committee Ranking Member Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) said. ... the wounded warrior provisions must be implemented with a sense of urgency," Buyer said.

<More at: www.vawatchdog.org/08/hcva08/hcva061108-3.htm

THE WAR WITHIN - EDITORIAL BY CHAIRMAN AKAKA

June 16, 2008

As the debate over the war in Iraq grows more intense and the presidential race heats up, it is more important than ever to maintain a sharp focus on the needs and concerns of those who are fighting overseas, especially when their time in combat leads to mental-health concerns.

As these brave men and women continue their dedication and service to our country in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we unfortunately must continue to fight on the home front to meet their needs when they return.

Today, many veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in earlier conflicts, are suffering from invisible wounds. Service members return home, but the war often follows them in their hearts and minds. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have made meeting the mental-health needs of returning service members one of the committee's highest priorities. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/08/scva08/scva061608-1.htm>

SOUDER, ELLSWORTH INTRODUCE VETERANS TRAVEL EQUITY ACT

June 16, 2008

Bill Would Give Vets Same Mileage Reimbursement as Fed. Workers

U.S. Reps. Mark Souder (R-IN) and Brad Ellsworth (D-IN) announced today that they are introducing the Veterans Travel Equity Act (H.R. 6287), bipartisan legislation that would give veterans the same mileage reimbursement rate as federal employees.

<More at: http://souder.house.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=NewsCenter.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=935247d2-19b9-b4b1-120f-4885726cfd&Region_id=&Issue_id>

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

RETREAT – NEWS

AS US MILITARY BUILDUP IN IRAQ ENDS, WHAT NEXT?

Lolita C. Baldor, Associated Press – 23 June 2008

The military buildup in Iraq is about to end. But as the last of the five additional combat brigades now heads home, it leaves the country far safer than it was a year ago. Yet Iraq is still not ready to stand alone.

The departure of the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division will lower U.S. troop levels there to roughly 142,000 U.S. personnel by mid-July — at least 7,000 more than before the buildup began early last year. But it also sets up pivotal questions about how many more can come home in this election year, and whether the decline in violence can be maintained by the fledgling Iraqi security forces.

Two reports released Monday laid out significant political, economic and security progress in Iraq. But both cautioned that the country remains unstable and volatile. The quarterly Iraq progress report issued by the Pentagon warned that Iran and Syria continue to provide safe havens for terrorists, and allow them to travel across the borders into Iraq. It also repeated concerns that Iran's Quds Force, an elite unit of its Revolutionary Guards, continues to supply both weapons and training for militants in Iraq.

On the domestic side, the report sounded a pessimistic tone, saying the government of Iraq still struggles to enact its budget and fund large projects to rebuild its infrastructure.

The government, it said, "lacks the ability to execute programs on the scale required," and economic improvements remain "fragile, reversible and uneven." <More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080623/ap_on_go_ca_st_pe/us_iraq_3>

THIS ISN'T EXACTLY NEWS, IS IT?

REPORTERS SAY NETWORKS PUT WARS ON BACK BURNER

Brian Stelter - June 23, 2008

Getting a story on the evening news isn't easy for any correspondent. And for reporters in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is especially hard, according to Lara Logan, the chief foreign correspondent for CBS News. So she has devised a solution when she is talking to the network. "Generally what I say is, 'I'm holding the armor-piercing R.P.G.,' " she said last week in an appearance on "The Daily Show," referring to the initials for rocket-propelled grenade. " 'It's aimed at the bureau chief, and if you don't put my story on the air, I'm going to pull the trigger.' "

Ms. Logan let a sly just-kidding smile sneak through as she spoke, but her point was serious. Five years into the war in Iraq and nearly seven years into the war in Afghanistan, getting news of the conflicts onto television is harder than ever. "If I were to watch the news that you hear here in the United States, I would just blow my brains out because it would drive me nuts," Ms. Logan said. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2008/06/23/business/media/23logan.html>

'SPECIAL WEAPONS' HAVE A FALLOUT ON BABIES

Ali al-Fadhily and Dahr Jamail*

FALLUJAH, Jun 12 (IPS) - Babies born in Fallujah are showing illnesses and deformities on a scale never seen before, doctors and residents say. The new cases, and the number of deaths among children, have risen after "special weaponry" was used in the two massive bombing campaigns in Fallujah in 2004.

After denying it at first, the Pentagon admitted in November 2005 that white phosphorous, a restricted incendiary weapon, was used a year earlier in Fallujah. In addition, depleted uranium (DU) munitions, which contain low-level radioactive waste, were used heavily in Fallujah. The Pentagon admits to having used 1,200 tonnes of DU in Iraq thus far. <More at: <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=42762>>

ARMY OVERSEER TELLS OF OUSTER OVER KBR STIR

James Risen - June 17, 2008

WASHINGTON — The Army official who managed the Pentagon's largest contract in Iraq says he was ousted from his job when he refused to approve paying more than \$1 billion in questionable charges to KBR, the Houston-based company that has provided food, housing and other services to American troops. The official, Charles M. Smith, was the senior civilian overseeing the multibillion-dollar contract with KBR during the first two years of the war. Speaking out for the first time, Mr. Smith said that he was forced from his job in 2004 after informing KBR officials that the Army would impose escalating financial penalties if they failed to improve their chaotic Iraqi operations.

Army auditors had determined that KBR lacked credible data or records for more than \$1 billion in spending, so Mr. Smith refused to sign off on the payments to the company. "They had a gigantic amount of costs they couldn't justify," he said in an interview. "Ultimately, the money that was going to KBR was money being taken away from the troops, and I wasn't going to do that." But he was suddenly replaced, he said, and his successors — after taking the unusual step of hiring an outside contractor to consider KBR's claims — approved most of the payments he had tried to block. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2008/06/17/washington/17contractor.html>

V.A. BAN ON VOTER DRIVES IS CRITICIZED

Ian Urbina - June 13, 2008

Voting rights groups are criticizing the Department of Veterans Affairs for its decision to ban registration drives among the veterans living at federally run nursing homes, shelters for the homeless and rehabilitation centers across the country. Although veterans are not federal employees, department officials based their decision in part on the Hatch Act, which bans federal employees from engaging in partisan political activity.

The department's policy is "to assist patients who seek to exercise their right to register and vote," according to a V.A. directive issued on May 5. "However, due to Hatch Act requirements and to avoid disruptions to facility operations, voter registration drives are not permitted."

Matt Smith, a spokesman for the Department of Veterans Affairs, said the department "wanted to ensure that our staff remains focused on caring for our veterans instead of having to determine the political agenda of each group that might try to enter our facilities." <More at: www.nytimes.com/2008/06/13/washington/13vote.html>

DOD MISLED GOVERNMENT ON NORAD MOVE

June 17, 2008 - Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. - The Pentagon understated the vulnerability faced by the nation's air and space defense command before it relocated to Colorado's Peterson Air Force Base, a newspaper reported June 16.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command moved from its longtime cave-complex home inside Cheyenne Mountain to Peterson in May. On March 3, military leaders reported to Congress that an assessment of a building at the air base that serves as the nation's homeland security nerve center found "several physical security problems." But The Gazette of Colorado Springs said it obtained a classified document that was even more critical. According to the document, the assessment found "the existing security system at Peterson AFB ... would fail if attacked by even a low level threat."

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/paper-dod-misled-govt-on-norad-move.html>

US COURT SAYS GUANTANAMO DETAINEE NOT 'ENEMY COMBATANT'

Michael Bowman - Washington - 23 June 2008

A U.S. federal appeals court has struck down the U.S. military's classification of a Guantanamo Bay detainee as an enemy combatant. VOA's Michael Bowman reports, this is the first time the U.S. court system has overruled the Bush administration's designation of a detainee since the Guantanamo facility began operations in early 2002.

<More at: www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2008/06/sec-080623-voa02.htm>

IN IRAQ TO STAY

Tom Engelhardt - Salon - Jun. 17, 2008

It's just a \$5,812,353 contract -- chump change for the Pentagon -- and not even one of those notorious "no-bid" contracts either. Ninety-eight bids were solicited by the Army Corps of Engineers and 12 were received before the contract was awarded this May 28 to Wintara Inc. of Fort Washington, Md., for "replacement facilities for Forward Operating Base Speicher, Iraq." According to a DoD press release, the work on those "facilities" to be replaced at the base near Saddam Hussein's hometown, Tikrit, is expected to be completed by January 31, 2009, a mere 11 days after a new president enters the Oval Office. It is but one modest reminder that, when the next administration hits Washington, American bases in Iraq, large and small, will still be undergoing the sort of repair and upgrading that has been ongoing for years. <More at: www.salon.com/news/feature/2008/06/17/iraq_bases_permanent/print.html>

ARMY PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE OVERSTEPS ITS BOUNDS IN PARTISAN POLITICS

Steve Benen - The AlterNet Carpetbagger Report - June 13, 2008

In the coming issue of Joint Force Quarterly, an official military journal widely distributed among officers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff writes a welcome but unusual open letter to everyone who wears an Armed Forces uniform: stay out of the political arena during the election season. "The U.S. military must remain apolitical at all times and in all ways," wrote the chairman, Adm. Mike Mullen, the nation's highest-ranking officer. "It is and must always be a neutral instrument of the state, no matter which party holds sway."

It's good advice, and a good policy. If only the Army's public affairs office had taken the Admiral's advice.

<More at: www.alternet.org/bloggers/http://www.thecarpetbaggerreport.com/88037/>

US WELCOMES FRANCE'S REJOINING NATO MILITARY COMMAND

The United States on Tuesday welcomed France's rejoining NATO's integrated military command. ... Earlier French President Nicolas Sarkozy confirmed France's plans to return to NATO's integrated command, which it left in 1966 when Charles de Gaulle rejected US dominance of the alliance. France was a founding member of NATO.

<More at: http://rawstory.com/news/afp/US_welcomes_France_s_rejoining_NATO_06172008.html>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
6/26	1000-1600	Holiday Inn Seattle / SeaTac Int'l Airport 17338 International Blvd, Seattle, WA	Pacific Regional Career Event		Register
6/27-29		Ferndale, CA	Standown	Kim Hall	707-826-6191
7/3 - 7/6		American Legion Post #25 Corbin Road, Newport, New Hampshire	The Wall That Heals	American Legion Post #25	
7/10	1100 - 1400	Holiday Inn Virginia Beach Exec Center 5655 Greenwich Road, Virginia Beach, VA	Norfolk Military Career Fair		757-499-4400
7/10	1000 - 1600	Scottish Rite Event Center 1895 Camino del Rio South, San Diego, CA	Western Regional Career Event		Register

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC. IS A NATIONAL, NON-PROFIT, PUBLIC SERVICE CORPORATION, INCORPORATED IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA [#C2766290]. DONATIONS TO VUFT ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE TO THE DONOR PER IRC SECTION 501(C)(3), AND FOR CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS UNDER CA RTC 23701W.

7/11		San Diego, CA	Standown	Darcy L. Pavich	619-497-0142
9/19	0800 - 1300	Cafeteria, American River College 4700 College Oak Drive, Sacramento, CA.	2nd Annual Road Home... From Combat to College	RSVP Cheryl Burkhart	

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

DISABLED SOLDIER RETURNING TO WAR, FACING "STOP LOSS"

Tom Philpott - The Hanford Sentinel - 20 June 2008

One day last August, while manning the .50-caliber gun atop his a Humvee on a dirt road in northern Iraq, Army Spc. Daniel "Joey" Haun suddenly lost consciousness. His vehicle had struck a buried bomb, an "improvised explosive device." Haun was ejected, his vehicle flipped over. On impact with the ground, Haun's left hand was driven up toward his forearm, crushing his wrist. The surgeon who rebuilt the wrist, using a metal plate and screws, told Haun last year that his infantry days were over. The blast also blew out Haun's right ear drum, which required surgery to partially restore his hearing. That surgeon warned him to avoid sustained exposure to any loud noises or risk having to wear a hearing aid.

As to head injuries, a neurologist diagnosed the 24-year-old with post concussive syndrome and mild traumatic brain injury, the likely cause of his daily headaches since the attack. Finally, a psychologist urged Haun to get counseling for his post-traumatic stress symptoms or they could devolve into Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a more debilitating condition. So while recuperating in a wounded warrior unit at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, Haun regularly saw a psychologist. He takes the drug Tramadol for his migraine headaches and Elavil, an anti-depressant, to ease his stress.

Adding to Haun's stress is this surprising news: he's returning to Iraq.

Though Haun expected to be separated or retired on disability, Army doctors have cleared him for transfer back to his infantry unit, Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division.

<More at: www.truthout.org/article/disabled-soldier-returning-war-facing-stop-loss>

END NOT NEAR FOR 'STOP LOSS'

Russ Bynum - Associated Press - 06/12/08

Chairman says it helps keep trained soldiers available

Fort Stewart — The U.S. military's top uniformed officer told an audience of Army troops Wednesday that the unpopular "stop loss" policy won't end anytime soon, and he predicted a small rise in the number of troops forced to serve past their re-enlistment or retirement dates. <More at: <http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/printedition/2008/06/12/iraq.html>>

WITNESSES LINK CHEMICAL TO ILL US SOLDIERS

Farah Stockman - Globe Staff - June 21, 2008

WASHINGTON - US soldiers assigned to guard a crucial part of Iraq's oil infrastructure became ill after exposure to a highly toxic chemical at the plant, witnesses testified at a Democratic Policy Committee hearing yesterday on Capitol Hill.

"These soldiers were bleeding from the nose, spitting blood," said Danny Langford, an equipment technician from Texas brought to work at the Qarmat Ali Water treatment plant in 2003. "They were sick."

"Hundreds of American soldiers at this site were contaminated" while guarding the plant, Langford said, including members of the Indiana National Guard. <More at: www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2008/06/21/witnesses_link_chemical_to_ill_us_soldiers/>

OUR VETS: HOMELESS, BROKEN AND ALONE

MICHELLE ROBERTS - June 17, 2008

His lifelong dream of becoming a soldier had, in the end, come to this for Isaac Stevens: 28, penniless, in a wheelchair, fending off the sexual advances of another man in a homeless shelter. Stevens' descent from Army private first-class, 3rd Infantry Division, 11 Bravo Company, began in 2005 — not in battle, since he was never sent off to Iraq or Afghanistan, but with a headfirst fall over a wall on the obstacle course at Fort Benning, Ga. He suffered a head injury and spinal damage.

The injury alone didn't put him in a homeless shelter. Instead, it was military bureaucracy — specifically, the way injured soldiers are discharged on just a fraction of their salary and then forced to wait six to nine months, and sometimes even more than a year, before their full disability payments begin to flow.

"When I got out, I hate to say it, but man, that was it. Everybody just kind of washed their hands of me, and it was like, 'OK, you're on your own,'" said Stevens, who was discharged in November and was in a shelter by February. He has since moved into a temporary San Antonio apartment with help from Operation Homefront, a nonprofit organization.

<More at: www.capitolhillblue.com/cont/node/8846>

'HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE GONE TO IRAQ'

Dan Ephron – NEWSWEEK - Jun 21, 2008

Pvt. David Dietrich had a history of cognitive problems. He struggled in boot camp at Fort Knox, Ky., striking at least one of his superiors as unfit for the military. Dietrich was so slow at processing new things, some fellow soldiers called him Forrest Gump. His squad leader, Pfc. Matthew Berg, says Dietrich couldn't hit targets on the rifle range and had trouble retaining information. "He was very strong physically, but mentally he wasn't really all there," Berg says. Recruited as a cavalry scout, one of the toughest specialties in the Army, Dietrich seemed to lack the essential skills for the job: concentration, decisiveness and the ability to move around without being noticed. He was sent for psychological evaluations at least twice, yet somehow Dietrich advanced—from Fort Knox to Germany and on to Iraq in November 2006. Eight weeks later, at 21, Dietrich was killed by a sniper while conducting reconnaissance from an abandoned building in Ramadi.

What was a guy like Dietrich doing in the military? At a time when an overstretched Army is sending into combat thousands of soldiers who once would have been considered mentally or physically unfit for duty, his story illuminates the complexities and human cost of the war—and shows how hard it is to find the line between tragic circumstances and military misconduct.

<More at: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/142640>>

THE NATION GIVETH ~~~

GI BILL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Rod Powers - Your Guide to US Military - Jun 23 2008

Congress has revamped the GI Bill for military members (including active duty, Reserves, and National Guard), who have at least 90 days of active duty service after September 11, 2001. The new program, commonly referred to as the "GI Bill for the 21st Century," offers substantial increases in monthly education benefits. The post 9/11 program goes into effect on August 1, 2009 and includes provisions to pay full tuition, \$1,000 per year for books and supplies, and a monthly housing stipend.

The new bill actually goes into effect during the 2008/2009 school year, but Congress has given the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) until August 1, 2009 to publish the new rates (which depends on the state one is attending college in). However, veterans eligible for the new program, who are currently going to school under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) will see their monthly rate increase to \$1,321 (\$200 per month more than the current GI Bill). When the VA determines the actual rates in August 2009, these veterans will receive a lump-sum payment for the difference. <More at: <http://usmilitary.about.com/od/gibillandta/a/newgibill.htm>>

THE SURPRISING HISTORY OF MILITARY COLLEGE BENEFITS

Kim Clark - June 17, 2008

For decades, politicians have struggled to balance rewarding service against the expense of generosity. The argument over whether America can afford the dollars and loss of experienced soldiers that a sweetened GI Bill might cost seem like brand-new concerns. After all, the original GI Bill of Rights is widely considered one of the most popular and successful laws ever passed. But historians say similar controversies have dogged veterans' benefits for decades. And, just as now, reform proposals divided some of the nation's most respected and prominent veterans.

<More at: www.usnews.com/articles/education/2008/06/17/the-recent-history-of-military-college-benefits.html>

~~~AND THE BANK TAKETH AWAY

MILITARY TOWNS ARE HIT HARD BY DEFAULTS

Kathleen M. Howley - Bloomberg News - June 21, 2008

Foreclosure rate is 4 times U.S. average

U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant Jeffrey VerSteegh, who repairs F-16 jets for the 132nd Fighter Wing, departed Des Moines, Iowa, in April for his third tour in Iraq. The father of four may lose his home when he returns.

The four-bedroom farmhouse he and his wife, Kathleen, own near the Iowa State Fairgrounds went into default in December after their monthly mortgage costs doubled to \$1,100. Kathleen missed work because of breast cancer, and they struggled to keep up the house. <More at: www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=764009>

'DISPOSABLE HEROES': VETERANS USED TO TEST SUICIDE-LINKED DRUGS

Brian Ross and Vic Walter - June 17, 2008

An abc news and washington times investigation reveals vets are being recruited for government tests on drugs with violent side effects mentally distressed veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are being recruited for government tests on pharmaceutical drugs linked to suicide and other violent side effects, an investigation by ABC News and The Washington Times has found.

<More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=5180437&page=1>>

CONGRESS: STOP DRUG TESTING ON VETS NOW AND INVESTIGATE

Vic Walter and Maddy Sauer - June 18, 2008 —

At least three more members of Congress are calling for an immediate suspension of government tests on veterans involving an anti-smoking drug that has been linked to suicide.

"Nearly 40 suicides and more than 400 incidents of suicidal behavior have been linked to Chantix, yet the VA has chosen to continue the study and administer Chantix to veterans with PTSD," said Congressman Bob Filner (D-CA). "The VA must immediately suspend this study until a comprehensive review of the safety of the protocol is conducted," said Rep. Filner.

Rep. Filner along with Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) and Rep. Paul Hodes (D-NH) sent a letter to the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs today expressing their concern over the ABC News report and asking, among other things, for copies of consent and notification forms related to the study. <More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=5192891&page=1>>

VETS GROUP CLAIMS DOD VIOLATES SEVERANCE LAW

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Jun 18, 2008

At the end of a boisterous House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing in which lawmakers lambasted Veterans Affairs Department and Pentagon officials for not meeting various deadlines for improving care for wounded combat troops, Disabled American Veterans dropped a quiet bombshell.

The Pentagon "knowingly violated the law and ignored the intent of Congress" in implementing a provision of the 2008 Defense Authorization Act that lawmakers designed to enhance disability severance pay for wounded and injured service members, wrote Kerry Baker, associate national legislative director for DAV. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2008/06/military_severance_061708w/>

IRS SEEKING RETIREES AND DISABLED VETERANS FOR STIMULUS PAYMENT

The Internal Revenue Service today announced a campaign to reach those retirees and disabled veterans who qualify stimulus payment but have not filed to claim it. New statistics indicate about 74 percent in this group are accounted for in the stimulus payments currently being sent, leaving about 5.2 million potential recipients remaining.

For all taxpayers, the IRS has issued 76.5 million payments worth \$63.8 billion based on 2007 tax returns processed so far. The agency expects to issue 124 million payments to Americans by year's end. Eligible individuals are receiving up to \$600 (\$1,200 for married couples filing joint returns) plus \$300 for eligible children younger than 17.

A special stimulus category includes recipients of certain benefits from Social Security and Veterans Affairs who do not normally have a requirement to file a tax return. These individuals must file a tax return before Oct. 15 this year to receive their stimulus payments.

... Qualifying income includes any combination of earned income, nontaxable combat pay and certain benefit payments from Social Security, Veterans Affairs and Railroad Retirement.

People not otherwise required to file an income tax return should file Form 1040A with basic information to ensure they receive the economic stimulus payment.

... The types of Veterans Affairs benefits that are considered qualifying income include disability compensation, disability pension and survivor payments.

<More at: <http://www.silverbelt.com/articles/2008/06/23/news/news02.txt>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF JUNE 18, 2008

This week the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps announced a decrease, while the Coast Guard number remained unchanged. The net collective result is 1,566 fewer reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 87,113; Navy Reserve, 5,476; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 12,017; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,994; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 784. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 114,384, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated can be found at <http://preview.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2008/d20080618nqr.pdf>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2008

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

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (1,878 DAYS)		OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,407 DAYS)	
KILLED US	4,106	KILLED US	531
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/31]	30,182	OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 10/2007]	1,994
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 4/5]	≥38,631	KILLED COALITION	327
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 3/1]	145	WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,472
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	3	KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED UK	176	KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/2004)	≥ 3,525
KILLED OTHER COALITION	137	WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819	AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.75M/4.8M
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30/07]	1,001		
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555		
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 92,883		
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400K – 1.2M	COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$531,198,125,691
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M		

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

* This entry has been changed to “Non-mortal casualties” which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to <http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

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

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

WHAT IS A VETERAN?

A "Veteran" -- whether active duty, discharged, retired, or reserve -- is someone who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States of America," for an amount of "up to, and including his life." That is honor, and there are way too many people in this country today who no longer understand that fact.

Author, Unknown

DISCOVER WHAT THE CANDIDATES SAY ABOUT VETERANS

Senator Barack Obama's official veteran web page:

<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/veterans/>

Senator John McCain's official veteran web page:

<http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/9cb5d2aa-f237-464e-9cdf-a5ad32771b9f.htm>

ADD-ON ~ VARIOUS STUFF

NATIONWIDE GRAVESITE LOCATOR FOR VETERANS

http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1

VETERANS UPWARD BOUND

Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) is a free U.S. Department of Education program designed to help eligible U.S. military veterans refresh their academic skills so that they can successfully complete the postsecondary school of their choosing.

ELIGIBILITY: In order to be eligible for participation in a VUB program an individual must be a low-income and/or first-generation college (meaning that neither of your parents have a four-year college degree) student, having served at least 180 days of active federal service, and have a discharge that is OTHER than dishonorable.

<Full information at: <http://navub.org/programinfo.htm>>

TWO VERSIONS OF THE ARMY'S "SOLDIER'S CREED" – THE OLD AND THE NEW

I MAY BE WRONG, BUT I BELIEVE THAT THE OLDER CREED SPOKE TO THE HISTORIC VALUES OF THE SOLDIER IN SERVICE TO HIS NATION. THE NEW ONE SEEMS TO ME TO SPEAK ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO THE TOUGHNESS OF THE SOLDIER AND HIS ABILITY TO FIGHT AND DESTROY.

THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE IN MY OPINION, AND IT MAY EXPLAIN WHY TODAY'S SOLDIERS SEEM TO BE MORE SELF-ORIENTED THAN NATION-ORIENTED.

THE OLDER CREED HAD THE CORE ELEMENTS OF *BUSHIDO* – THE CODE OF BEHAVIOR OF THE JAPANESE SAMURAI. THAT SEEMS TO BE MISSING IN THE MODERN CREED.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

POST VIETNAM WAR

I am an American Soldier.

I am a member of the United States Army -- a protector of the greatest nation on earth.

Because I am proud of the uniform I wear, I will always act in ways creditable to the military service and the nation it is sworn to guard.

I am proud of my own organization. I will do all I can to make it the finest unit in the Army.

I will be loyal to those under whom I serve. I will do my full part to carry out orders and instructions given to me or my unit.

As a soldier, I realize that I am a member of a time-honored profession--that I am doing my share to keep alive the principles of freedom for which my country stands.

No matter what the situation I am in, I will never do anything, for pleasure, profit, or personal safety, which will disgrace my uniform, my unit, or my country.

I will use every means I have, even beyond the line of duty, to restrain my Army comrades from actions disgraceful to themselves and to the uniform.

I am proud of my country and its flag.

I will try to make the people of this nation proud of the service I represent, for I am an American Soldier.

CURRENT

I am an American Soldier.

I am a Warrior and a member of a team.

I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values.

I will always place the mission first.

I will never accept defeat.

I will never quit.

I will never leave a fallen comrade.

I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough,

Trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills.

I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself.

I am an expert and I am a professional.

I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy, the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.

I am an American Soldier.

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.

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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