

# SOUND OFF!



VOL. IV, NO 23

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

*“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”*

25 JULY 2009

## FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

### STILL HERE BUT LONG FORGOTTEN

Every year, on or about the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I dig out my copy of the musical 1776. I have been doing this for almost three decades, and it never fails to both amuse and inspire.

It is not historically accurate – Richard Beeman’s new book, *Plain Honest Men*” recounts incidents from the 1787 Constitutional convention that are dead ringers for incidents in the musical’s depiction of the 1776 Independence convention. Nonetheless, it is a delight. It reminds me of the time when national leaders cared very much about the future of their country.

Sadly it also reminds me that the business of war and the business of national government, while often sealed and confirmed by military action, proceeds with little regard for the soldiers executing it.

Throughout the play a young soldier arrives repeatedly bringing messages from General Washington. His troops are starving, under-clothed, unpaid, and barely armed, and no one is doing much about it. There is a line in many of his dispatches that announces his frustration:

**“Is anybody there? Does anybody Care?”**

All around us we see that soldiers today face the same attitudes as they did 233 years ago.

**Nobody’s there, for them**

**Nobody cares, for them.**

The government refuses to perform its administrative oversight, but fires whistle-blowers in the various departments who do their job for them. Witness the firing of the woman who blew the whistle at Arlington Cemetery, and the near-firing at the nuclear storage depot.

The government quibbles over soldiers manning, equipping, and especially their veterans benefits, but provides bonuses for those executives who shortchange them at every turn. While the timeliness of response to veterans’ claims went in the toilet, senior executives were collecting bonuses that could marginally support a family of three. Pay them to do their job, and when they don’t, pay them some more. What a concept!

The government cares so little for them that they shortchange maintenance, safety, and particularly health and condemns those who dare complain on behalf of their soldiers to career oblivion.

Just now our soldiers who are fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq are getting lighter weight and more effective armor to wear in 125° heat – seven years into the battle! Just before World War II, the “Jeep” program was specified by five or six soldiers in an office in suburban Virginia, and the first jeeps came off the line less than six months later. Thousands of warplanes and tanks were produced within months of the onset of the war. Now we take years to solve simple problems and then pay the lowest bidder.

The legislature likewise has abandoned its oversight, responding only when some scandal makes the front pages, and they have to react or else explain to some pretend newsperson what they were doing when they were supposed to be working. (Trips to airport men’s rooms? Journeys to Argentina? Hiding cash in their freezers? Kissing any available posterior for campaign cash?).

Legislators support giveaways of veterans land across the country because their wealthy contributors want to use the land for commercial or cost-free community needs. Meanwhile at the other end of town veterans are sleeping under highway overpasses and in

abandoned buildings – witness the West LA VA Health care center in Henry Waxman’s district.

The legislature denies benefits, or cuts benefits already in place on the sole bases of political expediency or cost-effectiveness. The Senate Armed Forces Committee just defeated an amendment to the 2010 Defense Act that would have provided treatment for autism under TRICARE. I guess it is one of those old-time events – nobody issued you autism so it’s not our responsibility.

The long-term trials of those exposed to Agent Orange, suffering from Gulf War Syndrome, exposed to Depleted Uranium, poisoned by toxic materials and waste at military installations around the globe, or most of all, fighting PTSD fit in this category as well. The legislature colludes with the Executive to deny, deny, deny and then when forced to pay attention, they demand incontrovertible proof for each soldier that he or she was exposed to the poisons, or was exposed to a “stressor” that would qualify them for assistance. All of this, of course, happening in the well-established adversarial system that presumes the invalidity of almost every claim that isn’t supported by a missing limb or a nasty scar.

The legislature writes legislation that they don’t even bother to read and allows faulty language to be promulgated as law. When the bill they gave no attention to doesn’t work, they dally over correcting their lazy errors. So now the much-touted post 9/11 GI Bill doesn’t cover any tuition in California if the university called their tuition “fees”, which most do; and California isn’t the only one with problems.

Of course we shouldn’t expect any more attention to these bills than was paid to the Patriot Act and the Military Commission Act. (What are we paying these people for?)

There is no need belaboring their incredible lack of attention to the monumental task of deliberating and deciding to declare war – they haven’t done that since 1941, so why start now?

The news media can spend forty minutes of a network or cable news show talking about celebrities and then leave the balance to “the rest of the news” – those uninteresting things like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, political turmoil in Pakistan and Honduras, human rights violations in Sudan, Yemen, yes even in the United States. There is no time left for the soldier or the veteran or their suffering families.

The public rightly worries about the economy, their own health problems, education and the

environment. They spend precious little time, however, worrying about those same soldiers, those veterans, or those military and veteran families who are securing their lives for them. They are great at concentrating on their own problems, but they ignore the problems of those defending them. “Out of sight, out of mind.”

As states make cuts in vital programs, the public rises up to defend their school, their hospital, their highway, their library, their job. Who stands up for the soldier? Federal government programs are not delivering, and state programs are being cut back, but if it comes to their issue or the state veterans aid program, you can bet their issue comes first. They say, “You are a veteran. Get your help from the VA”, and shut the doors to veterans in their local programs.

The veteran is always caught between those who **don’t** and those who **won’t**.

Some people step up, but often more in feel-good ways than in any way that will effect change. Sending packages to the troops or writing letters has always received modest support in communities, but that doesn’t help much if you ignore the soldier’s family that can’t make it on food stamps. He loves the cookies, but worries about his family at home.

Parades for homecoming veterans don’t do much if, at the end of the day after the paraders have gone home, the veteran can’t get needed help to get on with a life, hold a family together, get an education, get a job, and return as a fully engaged member of the community. Parades over – get on with it – you’re on your own!

A few communities are stepping up in more effective ways through specialized veterans courts for veteran offenders, and special community college programs for returning veterans. Unfortunately there are only a handful of these programs.

*Many recent stories underscore these complaints. Since we will be off the air for a month, we have stretched the page count in this issue to include as many as possible.*

Along with George Washington’s refrain, let’s add another familiar one:

**Our God and soldiers we alike adore  
ev`n at the brink of danger; not before:  
After deliverance, both alike required,  
Our God`s forgotten, and our soldiers slighted**

Francis Quarles  
Elizabethan Poet

This issue is the final issue of Volume IV.  
The next issue, Volume V, No 1, will publish on 25 August

## REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

### NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

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

### WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

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

## ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

### VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

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

Case Progress to Date:

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

9/25/2007 Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

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

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

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

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

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

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

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants’ Reply Brief filed

6/11/09 Oral Arguments Scheduled for 12 August 2009

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

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

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

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

### A VETERAN AND THE GI BILL

Hello,

As a disabled veteran and full time student and recipient of the Montgomery GI Bill, I have an additional experience that seems to follow along the same lines. VA has announced their impending launch of the new Post 9/11 GI Bill (chapter 33) to begin on 1 August, 2009. They have repeatedly gone on the record and assured the public that unlike their notorious delay with disability claims and health care - they will certainly be ready to go on 1 August and there will be zero delays.

Now, the Post 9/11 has its own problems (for online learners and CA residents) but its birth seems to be causing a massive delay in current chapter 30 beneficiaries. For the first time in 19 months my certification link wasn't available when I logged in for the month of June to verify my attendance. After phoning the VA (and them blaming my college) I learn that they are six weeks behind on certifications. My spouse is also a student..he received the same information...and blame on the college (different than my own).

I work on a military base and am surrounded by veterans so I started asking around. I have yet to find a single student that was able to verify or certify on time. And each one of them were told that their own college was to blame.

I phoned the VA today (7/23) and was told that now they are 8 weeks behind. And in addition to them being 8 weeks behind on the certification, I'll likely have to wait an additional 8 weeks for that payment. In essence, 16 weeks to get paid for a one month period. When I asked if this was only for this month (as it was the start of the summer semester) I was told that this delay is expected to increase and carry on indefinitely. Wow, now my heart is racing.

I had already told my landlord that we were short \$2600 this month (as we both rely on GI Bill) but now I had to find a way to not only come up with that money but to do so for the next several months. My story is not unique. I work full time and also receive disability benefits so I will beg, borrow and plead and I will make it...but others cannot be so fortunate. I have to wonder, is there a connection between the projected success and timely service of the Post 9/11 GI bill and the sudden 2 month back up in current recipients? Please, speak up for the vets...our voice doesn't seem to be quite loud enough through the mouth of VA.

Very respectfully, Tiffany Davidson [tiffany.davidson@navy.mil](mailto:tiffany.davidson@navy.mil)

## **RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS**

### **H.R. 952, THE COMBAT ACT**

H.R. 952, the COMBAT (Compensation Owed for Mission Based Activities in Theatre) Act, to ensure adequate treatment and compensation for soldiers with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). For too long soldiers have returned from overseas battles, bearing mental and physical wounds, only to be forced to fight another war to get their benefits from the VA. Currently, veterans face an adversarial process when they seek treatment and compensation from the VA. This is especially true for soldiers who have PTSD.

As a citizen you can endorse this bill. Please go to [http://johnhall.house.gov/veterans\\_combatact.asp](http://johnhall.house.gov/veterans_combatact.asp) and send your support.

### **CAREGIVERS OF WOUNDED VETERANS COULD GET FEDERAL AID**

Michael A. Fuoco, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette - July 19, 2009

Momentum is growing on Capitol Hill to provide additional and consistent support to primary caregivers of seriously injured service members from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On April 2, Sen. Daniel K. Akaka, D-Hawaii, chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, and ranking member Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., introduced Senate Bill 801, the Family Caregiver Program Act of 2009. The Department of Veterans Affairs "motto is to 'care for him who shall have borne the battle,'" Mr. Akaka said. "VA must recognize and support these family caregivers for what they are: partners in a shared mission." <More at: [www.post-gazette.com/pg/09200/984649-51.stm](http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09200/984649-51.stm)>

### **CONGRESSIONALLY MANDATED NATIONAL REVIEW OF VA DOMICILIARIES RELEASED; VA AGREES REFORM NEEDED**

July 9, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, issued the following statement today on a newly released congressionally-mandated national review of VA's residential mental health care facilities, dedicating the effort to a young Iraq war veteran who died in a VA domiciliary facility while receiving care for PTSD and a substance abuse disorder:

*"The tragic death of Justin Bailey after he came home from Iraq demonstrated the need for a national review of VA mental health care facilities. This report indicates what we and the Bailey family feared – some VA facilities still have not corrected the errors that may have contributed to his death, more than two years after his passing," said Senator Akaka. "I am encouraged by the Administration's full agreement with the report's recommendations, and I stand ready to assist in implementing these needed changes."*

Akaka championed Public Law 110-387, the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008, a sweeping veterans' mental health care bill which included a tribute to Bailey and required this national review.

- The report, by VA's Office of Inspector General, found the following based on a national survey and random review of 20 sample sites:
- Less than half of the sites visited had appropriate policies for screening patients to be admitted into the VA residential mental health facility programs,
- Post-discharge monitoring was not evident for nearly 3-out-of-10 residents based on residential patient records, and
- An estimated 11 percent of VA Self Medication Policy patients on narcotics received more than a 7-day supply of medication.

The IG made 10 recommendations based on the review, all of which were accepted by VA. The full report, which includes a list of the locations and programs visited during the inspections, is available at [www.va.gov/oig/54/reports/VAOIG-08-00038-152.pdf](http://www.va.gov/oig/54/reports/VAOIG-08-00038-152.pdf)

### **FEMALE VETERANS WANT FEMALE-FRIENDLY VA**

July 19, 2009

Female veterans told a Senate panel last week that the Veterans Affairs Department often fails to provide adequate medical care to female military veterans. A Veterans Affairs official agreed.

"At the root is a system that has not been responsive to the needs of women veterans," said Patricia Hayes, the department's national director of women's health care.

The VA acknowledged that it's struggling to adapt to the unique needs of female veterans. The idea that the military should provide pap smears and mammograms is still somewhat new, VA officials said.

Beyond female-specific issues, the Senate panel was also told that, in general, getting clear answers from the VA was difficult.

Army veteran Genevieve Chase, who was wounded in Afghanistan, said she was frustrated seeking help for her post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries. The VA Web site was unclear and the phone advice unfriendly, Chase said.

"In communicating with other veterans, I have found that I am hardly alone in this," she said. "Veterans should not need a third party to help them navigate the VA system."

[www.freep.com/article/20090719/NEWS07/907190450/WEEK-IN-REVIEW--Female-veterans-want-female-friendly-VA](http://www.freep.com/article/20090719/NEWS07/907190450/WEEK-IN-REVIEW--Female-veterans-want-female-friendly-VA)

### **STATEMENT OF BRUCE MCCARTNEY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

I enrolled in the VA Independent Living Program (ILP) November 2003. Four plus years later, after constant emails, phone calls and inquiries, the process was completed.

Many other disabled veterans (Vietnam and OIF) are having similar issues as the ones I faced trying to get assistance with the ILP. The issues appear to be lack of understanding of the program by local case managers, lack of transparency (where is the paperwork in the process), lack of assistance (took months to get a reply), lack of oversight and auditing (took over four years to complete this application and that does not include a proper post-project dialogue) and pass the buck syndrome (inquiries to higher command are met with auto reply emails/letters that led to no solutions).

**Read the full statement including the four-year timeline at:**

<http://veterans.house.gov/hearings/Testimony.aspx?TID=41472&Newsid=273&Name=%20Bruce%20%20McCartney>

### **MOORE AMENDMENT WOULD PROTECT HISTORIC VETERANS PROPERTY FROM BEING PRIVATELY DEVELOPED**

Salem-News.com Jul-10-2009

Currently, the Milwaukee Soldiers' Home is on the National Park Service list to earn a place on the National Register of Historic Places.

(WASHINGTON D.C.) - The United States House of Representatives today passed a Moore amendment that would protect historic veterans' grounds in Milwaukee from potential commercial development. (see: [Group Fights to Save VA Facility for Injured Soldiers - Tim King Salem-News.com](#))

When we first examined this story in October 2007, John Lewandowski, one of the military veterans heading the effort to save the place, told Salem-News.com, "This is hallowed ground, and they want to make a buck off of it, it is wrong."

The controversy surrounding the Civil War home began in the early 1990's when Congress passed a law called the EUL or "Enhanced Use Lease" program. This allows is the VA to Sell Off any part of land or buildings that they deem "excessive" on any VA Property in the Country.

The amendment to the Military Construction and Veterans Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2010 would prohibit funds from being used to process new leases for commercial development on historic veterans' property. These leases are known as Enhanced Use Leases (EUL). <More at: [http://salem-news.com/articles/july102009/civil\\_war\\_home\\_7-10-09.php](http://salem-news.com/articles/july102009/civil_war_home_7-10-09.php)>

### **OREGON HOUSE BILL 2744 TO BECOME LAW**

Effective January 1, 2010, employers in Oregon with 25 or more employees must provide leave during specific periods of time to certain employees who are spouses of military members serving on active duty. During a time of war, an employee whose spouse has been called or ordered to active duty is entitled to 14 days of unpaid leave per deployment, after the notification of deployment has been received but before the deployment occurs. Similarly, up to 14 days of unpaid leave per deployment is available to employees who are military spouses when the service member is on leave from deployment.

Employees who intend to take this leave must notify their employer within five business days of receiving official notice of spouse's deployment or leave from deployment. Employees will be permitted to substitute any accrued leave during their time away. The Bureau of Labor and Industries will enforce this law. If an employer fails to grant leave to an employee-spouse exercising their right to military family leave, the employee-spouse could file a discrimination or retaliation suit.

### **RETREAT – NEWS**

#### **DID SOMEBODY FORGET? PROTECT THE TROOPS FIRST!**

#### **NERVE GAS LEAK DETECTORS INOPERATIVE FOR YEARS ARMY REPORT CONFIRMS BLUE GRASS CHEMICAL WEAPONS DEPOT WAS "FLYING BLIND"**

WASHINGTON - July 20 - In a newly released report, the U.S. Army has admitted that the nerve gas leak monitors at a major Kentucky chemical weapons depot did not work for nearly two years. Managers at the Blue Grass Army Depot, located outside of Richmond, 30 miles south of Lexington, had rendered the detectors inoperative and the problem was finally remedied only after a whistleblower was forced to file a complaint, according to an Inspector General investigation posted today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER).

The Army Inspector General (IG) report, dated February 10, 2006, confirms the chief concerns raised by Donald Van Winkle, a chemical weapons monitoring operator at Blue Grass that -

- Leak detectors were improperly removed from inside the igloos holding highly lethal VX nerve gas;
- As a result, from September 2003 to August 2005 (after Van Winkle came forward), Blue Grass had no means, other than visual observation, to determine whether the odorless, colorless nerve gas was seeping from the rockets in which the agent is stored; and
- These changes were contrary to Army protocols and safety standards but only minor disciplinary action was taken against the responsible managers.

Read the Army Inspector General Report on Blue Grass <[www.peer.org/docs/dod/09\\_20\\_07\\_Army\\_IG\\_Blue\\_Grass\\_report.pdf](http://www.peer.org/docs/dod/09_20_07_Army_IG_Blue_Grass_report.pdf)>

<More at: [www.peer.org/news/news\\_id.php?row\\_id=1219](http://www.peer.org/news/news_id.php?row_id=1219)>

#### **DESPITE 100 ATTACKS, UNIT LEAVES AFGHAN WAR WITH NO CASUALTIES**

Mike Boettcher - Combat Outpost Lowell, Afghanistan - July 18, 2009—

Over the past year, the several dozen U.S. troops hunkered down in Combat Outpost Lowell have seen more firefights than any unit in Afghanistan.

The outpost is situated in rugged Afghan territory in Nuristan Province, close to the Pakistan border. Its job has been to disrupt al Qaeda and Taliban smuggling routes through the area.

Located on the northern part of Afghanistan's border with Pakistan, the troops in Combat Outpost Lowell did not see any reinforcements from the U.S. surge, which has been concentrated in southern part of the country.

But the Taliban has had a surge of its own, making July the bloodiest month of the Afghan war so far for U.S. troops. Part of the Taliban offensive was a determined effort to erase Lowell from the map. The Taliban attacked the outpost nearly 100 times in the past year.

But the men of Apache Troop, out of Fort Hood, Texas, are now heading home with a basketful of medals and the best victory they can think of -- they haven't lost a single soldier to enemy fire. <More at: [abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=8119034&page=1](http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=8119034&page=1)>

## **SOLDIER HELD IN AFGHANISTAN IS 23-YEAR-OLD IDAHOAN**

HAILEY, Idaho (AP) - A soldier from Idaho who disappeared from his base in Afghanistan has been captured, the Pentagon confirmed Sunday, a day after he was seen in a Taliban video posted online.

The Defense Department released the name of Pfc. Bowe (pronounced BOH) R. Bergdahl, 23, who was serving with an Alaska-based infantry regiment. The private was last seen walking away from his base near the border with Pakistan in an area known to be a Taliban stronghold.

Even before his name became public, two U.S. defense officials confirmed to The Associated Press that the man in that 28-minute video was the captured soldier. The video, in which Bergdahl said he was "scared I won't be able to go home," provided the first public glimpse of the missing American.

The Pentagon statement said Bergdahl's whereabouts became unknown on July 1 and his status was changed July 3 to missing-captured. <More at: <http://apnews.excite.com/article/20090719/D99HM1600.html>>

## **I GUESS IF YOU GET PAID TO BE AN "EXPERT" YOU CAN SAY ANYTHING YOU DAMNED WELL PLEASE – SHAME ON YOU PETERS**

### **VETS IN CONGRESS DISGUSTED BY ANALYST'S COMMENTS ON MISSING SOLDIER**

Leo Shane - July 22nd, 2009

A group of 23 veterans in Congress -- including Iraq war veterans John Boccieri, D-Ohio; Patrick Murphy, D-Pa.; and Duncan Hunter, R-Calif. -- sent out an angry letter today to the CEO of Fox News blasting [retired Lt. Col. Ralph Peters' comments](#) implying that the Taliban should kill [Pvt. 1st Class Bowe Bergdahl](#) if he's found to be a deserter.

... The group is demanding an apology from Peters and the network. <More -- including the text of the letter -- at: <http://blogs.stripes.com/blogs/stripes-central/vets-congress-disgusted-analysts-comments-missing-soldier>

### **MILITARY COMMISSIONS EXPOSE DEEP DIVISIONS IN CONGRESS**

Anna Mulrine - July 17, 2009

When Lt. Col. Darrel Vandeveld took up his job as a prosecutor for the Office of Military Commissions in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in May 2007, he was, he said, "a true believer" in his charge to bring to justice prisoners whom President Bush had deemed "the worst of the worst."

But what Vandeveld witnessed until he left his job in September 2008—including confessions obtained through torture, abusive interrogations, and "ugly attempts to cover up" the failures of the system—changed his mind. It also convinced the lawyer, a veteran of the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan, that the military commissions are "broken beyond repair."

<More at: [www.usnews.com/articles/news/2009/07/17/military-commissions-expose-deep-divisions-in-congress\\_print.htm](http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/2009/07/17/military-commissions-expose-deep-divisions-in-congress_print.htm)>

### **PENTAGON SEEKS TO OVERHAUL PRISONS IN AFGHANISTAN**

Eric Schmitt - July 20, 2009

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — A sweeping United States military review calls for overhauling the troubled American-run prison here as well as the entire Afghan jail and judicial systems, a reaction to worries that abuses and militant recruiting within the prisons are helping to strengthen the Taliban.

In a further sign of high-level concern over detention practices, Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent a confidential message last week to all of the military service chiefs and senior field commanders asking them to redouble their efforts to alert troops to the importance of treating detainees properly.

The prison at this air base north of Kabul has become an ominous symbol for Afghans — a place where harsh interrogation methods and sleep deprivation were used routinely in its early years, and where two Afghan detainees died in 2002 after being beaten by American soldiers and hung by their arms from the ceiling of isolation cells.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/2009/07/20/world/asia/20detain.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/20/world/asia/20detain.html)>

## **2ND KY. WIDOW SETTLES SUIT OVER HUSBAND'S VA DEATH**

Jim Suhr (AP) – 14 July 2009

EAST ST. LOUIS, Ill. (AP) — The second of two Kentucky widows has settled her federal lawsuit over surgical care they say killed their husbands at an Illinois Veterans Affairs hospital where major surgeries have been halted for nearly two years after a spike in patient deaths.

Terms of Darla Marshall's April settlement over 61-year-old James Marshall's July 2007 blood infection death six days after his lymph node biopsy at the VA hospital in Marion were not disclosed in online court records. The Benton, Ky., widow had sought \$10 million in her wrongful-death lawsuit, filed here in April of last year.

Another widow, Katrina Shank of Murray, Ky., last year settled for \$975,000 her lawsuit involving Robert Shank III, an Air Force veteran who was 50 when he bled to death in 2007 a day after undergoing gallbladder surgery at the Marion site. Katrina Shank had sought \$12 million in damages.

Both were patients of surgeon Jose Veizaga-Mendez, who resigned in August 2007 three days after Shank died.

Within a month of Shank's death, surgeries at the Marion site — which serves veterans from southern Illinois, southwestern Indiana and western Kentucky — were halted after the VA found that at least nine deaths between October 2006 and March 2007 were "directly attributable" to substandard care there.

<More at: [www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ipy010hjb\\_WoXRbsl7uXJVLr60BAD99EDN0G0](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ipy010hjb_WoXRbsl7uXJVLr60BAD99EDN0G0)>

## **ARMY: SOLDIERS IN SLAYINGS FACED INTENSE COMBAT**

P. Solomon banda - Associated Press Writer - Jul 15, 2009

FORT CARSON, Colo. (AP) -- The psychological trauma of fierce combat in Iraq may have helped drive soldiers in a single battle-scarred Army unit to kill as many as 11 people after their return home, the military said Wednesday.

In a report billed as the most comprehensive examination to date of violent crimes and combat exposure, an Army task force of medical experts looked at members of Fort Carson's 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, known as the Iron Eagles.

Soldiers in the unit were accused in five killings in separate attacks around Colorado Springs in 2007 and 2008, including the slaying of a couple gunned down while posting a garage-sale sign. They were also involved in six more slayings in Colorado and other states since 2005. <More at: [http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US\\_SOLDIER\\_SLAYINGS](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_SOLDIER_SLAYINGS)>

## **VA GETS REAL, SUSPENDS 45 IT PROJECTS**

Bob Brewin - 07/17/09

The Veterans Affairs Department on Friday said it halted development of 45 information technology projects that were behind schedule or over budget, with Secretary Eric Shinseki personally making the announcement.

Shinseki, who promised to leverage technology to develop a 21st century VA during his confirmation hearing in January, said he put the brakes on the projects because "VA has a responsibility to the American people, who are investing millions of dollars in technology projects, to deliver quality results that adhere to a budget and are delivered on time."

<More at: [http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2009/07/va\\_gets\\_real\\_suspends\\_45\\_it\\_pr.php](http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2009/07/va_gets_real_suspends_45_it_pr.php)>

## **ARMY REPORTS ON FIRING WANTED IN LAWSUIT**

Ben Conery - July 18, 2009

A former official at Arlington National Cemetery who said she was fired last year after clashing publicly with top cemetery officials has filed a lawsuit aiming to expose more chicanery and possible criminal activity involving those who run the nation's most hallowed burial ground.

In one instance, according to Gina Gray's lawsuit, an Army investigation found the cemetery's deputy superintendent had lied to agents during a criminal probe related to her firing, but has never faced any consequences.

The lawsuit seeks the release of the final report and supporting documents from the Army Criminal Investigation Command's probe into Ms. Gray's allegations that someone had accessed her work e-mail account without her permission and a message was sent impersonating her. <More at: [www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/18/army-reports-on-cemetery-firing-sought-in-lawsuit/](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/18/army-reports-on-cemetery-firing-sought-in-lawsuit/)>



## **WATCHDOG GROUP: DOZENS OF ACTIVE-DUTY TROOPS FOUND ON NEO-NAZI SITE**

Kevin Baron - Stars and Stripes Mideast edition - July 10, 2009

In his "about me" section, "SoldatAMG" describes himself as a "Sergeant in USMC stationed at Camp Lejeune. I recently returned from my 3rd trip to Iraq. I fight every day to stem the tide of multiculturalism and to ensure that my children have a better world. SIEG HEIL!"

"geisler" identifies himself as "in the army as a human resources specialist." He says he is ready "to find a woman I can settle down with and have a nice, WHITE family (unlike some in the army with all the race traitors)." Among his hobbies is "to further the preservation and existence of our race. That, and helping those victims of race mixing (because I was one)."

"BounceandBurst" says he is "tired of the destruction of our clean white culture and heritage, the poison of black culture in our society, and the illegal invasion of Mexico into our sovereign nation."

WASHINGTON — It is Facebook for the fascist set, and the typical online profiles of its members reveal expected tastes.

- Favorite book: "Mein Kampf."
- Favorite movie: the Nazi propaganda film "Triumph of the Will."
- Interests: "white women."
- Dislikes: "anyone who opposes the master race."

But there's one other thing that dozens of members of newsaxton.org, a white supremacist social networking website, have in common: They proudly identify themselves as active-duty members of the U.S. armed forces.

<More at: [www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=63650](http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=63650)>

## **FINANCIAL PROBLEMS OR PTSD NEED NOT AFFECT SECURITY CLEARANCE**

Tamara Haire - Jul 8, 2009

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, July 8, 2009) -- With the nation in the throes of an economic downturn and entering the seventh year of overseas combat, some Soldiers and civilians are worried about their security clearance. The stress of combat and the rise in foreclosures have some Soldiers wondering if their security clearance will be impacted.

"All Army personnel should understand that they can obtain counseling services for financial and mental health issues without undue concern of placing their security clearance status in jeopardy," said Col. Edward Fish, commander, U.S. Army Central Personnel Security Clearance Facility, known as the CCF.

<More at: [www.army.mil/news/2009/07/08/24053-financial-problems-or-ptsd-need-not-affect-security-clearance/](http://www.army.mil/news/2009/07/08/24053-financial-problems-or-ptsd-need-not-affect-security-clearance/)>

## **COME ON GUYS! LIKE THEM OR NOT, THEY WERE OUR ALLIES**

### **SOUTH VIETNAMESE VET MEMORIAL KEPT OUT OF PARK**

Wichita Eagle, Kan. - July 20, 2009

A group of Wichita-area American veterans agreed Sunday to back a proposed compromise that would keep a memorial to South Vietnamese soldiers out of a downtown Wichita park.

A one-hour meeting on the issue drew about 60 people to the American Legion Post 136 in Mulvane. Those who attended voted overwhelmingly to support the proposal.

"We achieved everything that we set out to achieve," said John Wilson, of the Kansas Veterans Action Committee, a group that has opposed the memorial at the park.

Dennis Scuffham, who also opposes the memorial at the park, said he was willing to accept the compromise, in part, because "I don't know if it's going to get any better than this or not."

"We've done our job," he said. "...It's not in our park."

The Vietnamese Community of Wichita has raised money for a memorial to honor soldiers who fought alongside American troops against Communist North Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

But plans to put the memorial in Veterans Memorial Park in downtown Wichita drew the objections of many people. Among their objections: The park is meant to memorialize U.S. military veterans.

<More at: [www.military.com/news/article/s-vietnamese-vet-memorial-shut-out-of-park.html](http://www.military.com/news/article/s-vietnamese-vet-memorial-shut-out-of-park.html)>

## TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
7/24-7/27		Ventura, CA	Stand Down	<a href="#">Claire L. Hope</a>	805-987-3118
7/27-8/2		Galt House Hotel, 140 N Fourth St Louisville, KY 40202	Vietnam Veterans of America Biennial Convention	<a href="#">VVA</a>	
7/30-8/2		Alumni Park Richland IA	The Wall That Heals	American Legion Post 504	
7/30-8/3		Angela Center Santa Rosa, CA	Retreat for OIF/OEF Veterans and their families	Coming Home Project	Free of charge <a href="#">Apply</a>
7/30	1000- 1600	Embassy Suites Denver - Aurora 4444 North Havana Street Denver, C	Midwest Regional Career Event		<a href="#">Register</a>
7/31	1000- 1400	Garden Grove Center, 12901 Euclid Street, Garden Grove	Veterans-to-Veterans Forum	Coastline College	<a href="#">Register</a> Register by 7/27
8/6	1100- 1400	Omni San Antonio Hotel 9821 Colonnade Blvd San Antonio, TX 78230	Career Fair		<a href="#">Register</a>
8/12	0930	The James r. Browning Courthouse 95 7th street, San Francisco, CA	Oral Arguments Appeal VUFT suit vs. VA	VUFT	<a href="#">Get Directions</a>
8/13-8/16		Memorial Park Quakertown, PA	The Wall That Heals	American Legion Post 242	
8/14		Grand Rapids, MI	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Kay L. VanDrunen</a>	616-234-0220
8/16	1300- 1600	Corner of San Vicente Blvd. & Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles CA	Stop the land grab of veteran's property	Bob Rosebrock Steve Crandall	310-472-2717 805-388-1542
8/20	1000- 1600	Seattle Airport Marriott 3201 South 176th Street Seattle, WA 98188	Northwest Regional Career Event		<a href="#">Register</a>
8/20-8/22		Marysville, CA	Stand Down	<a href="#">Korina Ayers</a>	530-315-7097
8/20-8/23		300 Macedon Center Road Perinton, New York	The Wall That Heals	Post 8495 VFW	
8/22		Hamilton, MT	Resource Fair	Dave Webber/ Allen Sperry	406-546-8028

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

## TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

### **HUD RELEASES 4TH ANNUAL HOMELESS ASSESSMENT REPORT**

July 11, 2009

#### **12 Percent of all Sheltered Homeless Adults are Veterans**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has issued its [2008 Annual Homeless Assessment Report](#) to Congress, a national study that explores changes in homelessness nationwide. HUD's assessment concludes that while overall homelessness in America held fairly steady from 2007 to 2008, the number of homeless families, particularly those living in suburban and rural areas, increased.

<More at: [www.veteranstoday.com/article7891.html](http://www.veteranstoday.com/article7891.html)>

### **AUDITORS: PRIVACY LACKING AT SOME VA HOSPITALS**

Kimberly Hefling (AP) – 19 July 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) — Veterans Affairs Department hospitals and clinics aren't always making sure women veterans have privacy when they bathe and receive exams, government auditors said Tuesday.

As thousands of women veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan and enter the VA's health system, the Government Accountability Office reported that no VA hospital or outpatient clinic under review is complying fully with federal privacy requirements.

GAO investigators found that many VA facilities had gynecological tables that faced the door — including one door that opened to a waiting room. It also found instances where women had to walk through a waiting area to use the restroom, instead of it being next to an exam room as required by VA policy. Full report at: [www.gao.gov/new.items/d09884t.pdf](http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09884t.pdf)  
<More at: [www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iONWUd7kqCd2ikXL4fnmSlw9bN7QD99EB1A00](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iONWUd7kqCd2ikXL4fnmSlw9bN7QD99EB1A00)>

### **VETS' MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSES RISING**

James Dao - July 17, 2009

A new study has found that more than one-third of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who enrolled in the veterans health system after 2001 received a diagnosis of a mental health problem, most often post-traumatic stress disorder or depression.

The study by researchers at the San Francisco Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the University of California, San Francisco, also found that the number of veterans found to have mental health problems rose steadily the longer they were out of the service. <More at: [www.nytimes.com/2009/07/17/health/views/17vets.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/17/health/views/17vets.html)>

### **PTSD IGNORED ON ACTIVE DUTY**

Maya Schenwar -- truthout Report - 16 July 2009

*Neglect, mistreatment and abuse are the norm for active-duty soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).*

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have thrown post-traumatic stress disorder into stark public light. As of the end of March, 346,393 US veterans were being treated for PTSD; 115,000 of those served in Iraq or Afghanistan. That number continues to grow rapidly.

However, PTSD symptoms don't always wait to emerge until soldiers return home. For active-duty soldiers like Airman Steven Flowers, stationed in Aviano, Italy, it can take years to receive even minimal care. And once treatment begins, the soldiers are often punished for revealing their problems. <More at: [www.truthout.org/071509R?n](http://www.truthout.org/071509R?n)>

### **QUICK ONSET OF BLOOD CANCERS PUZZLES EXPERTS**

Kelly Kennedy - 18 July 2009

Researchers wonder if burn pits sped disease development

When Army Staff Sgt. Danielle Nienajadlo arrived at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, in April 2008, she had a clean medical history and recent blood work to prove it.

But three months later, after weeks of muscle fatigue, nausea, headaches and coughing up black phlegm, she went to the base emergency room after she spent a night vomiting and in pain. On July 26, 2008, she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia.

"I am now a number, a statistic, a secret that no one wants to face," she told Military Times last fall. "I know that I got my disease in Iraq." The 32-year-old mother of three died March 20.

Her case, and those of 70 other cancer victims who contacted Military Times or Disabled American Veterans in recent months, have left experts debating whether their leukemias and lymphomas could have developed so quickly.

<More at: <http://vets4politics.blogspot.com/2009/07/researchers-wonder-if-burn-pits-spied.html>>

### **SPERM DAMAGE FROM TOXINS CAN AFFECT CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN**

ScienceDaily (Feb. 21, 2008)

The consequence of maternal exposure to a variety of potentially toxic agents during pregnancy remains the prime focus of concern in scientific endeavors and in society at large.

However, there is now mounting evidence that paternal exposure can also adversely affect fetal and postnatal development of offspring and that this imprint can be expressed in subsequent generations.

<More at: [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080217133251.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080217133251.htm)>

### **IRAQ VETERAN BLAMES HIS SUFFERING ON CHEMICAL EXPOSURE**

Keri Brown - July 10, 2009

Seven National Guard veterans in West Virginia are among 50 nationwide who say they are experiencing severe health problems after being exposed to a toxic chemical in Iraq.

The veterans are suing civilian contractor KBR Inc. for not warning them of the dangers they faced protecting KBR workers at an Iraqi water treatment plant.

The lawsuit claims the National Guard veterans were exposed to hexavalent chromium. That's the same chemical made famous in the movie "Erin Brokovich" for sickening people in a small California town.

<More at: [www.wvpubcast.org/newsarticle.aspx?id=10375](http://www.wvpubcast.org/newsarticle.aspx?id=10375)>

### **1 IN 8 COMBAT TROOPS NEEDS ALCOHOL COUNSELING**

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Jun 29, 2009

One in eight troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan from 2006 to 2008 were referred for counseling for alcohol problems after their post-deployment health assessments, according to data from the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center.

<More at: [www.armytimes.com/news/2009/06/army\\_alcohol\\_062709w/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/06/army_alcohol_062709w/)>

### **WOUNDS OF WAR: DRUG PROBLEMS AMONG IRAQ, AFGHAN VETS COULD DWARF VIETNAM**

Bob Curley - TransWorldNews) - Atlanta, GA - 7/06/2009

The U.S. could face a wave of addiction and mental-health problems among returning veterans of the Iraq and Afghan wars greater than that resulting from the Vietnam War, according to experts at the recent *Wounds of War conference* sponsored by the National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA\*) at Columbia University (Join Together is a project of CASA).

<More at: [www.transworldnews.com/NewsStory.aspx?id=99733&cat=10](http://www.transworldnews.com/NewsStory.aspx?id=99733&cat=10)>

### **CRITICAL WARNING SIGNS MISSED AT PHILLY VA**

July 23, 2009

Weak Oversight Efforts Fail to Protect Veterans

Washington, D.C. – On Wednesday, July 22, 2009, the House Veterans' Affairs Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, led by Chairman Harry Mitchell (D-AZ), conducted a hearing to evaluate the safety standards of the brachytherapy program administered by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

... "Reports of botched prostate cancer procedures, a lack of quality and standard controls in the VA healthcare system and egregious errors in the brachytherapy treatment at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center are unacceptable and wrong," Chairman Mitchell said. "While we are disturbed that, perhaps, there was a lack of proper local quality controls and management of these brachytherapy programs, our main concern is that the problems marring the program in Philadelphia could be happening at the other facilities still doing these procedures." <More at: [www.vawatchdog.org/09/hcva09/hcva072309-1.htm](http://www.vawatchdog.org/09/hcva09/hcva072309-1.htm)>

### **VA HOSPITALS BOTCHING TREATMENTS**

25 June 2009 00:00

The Department of Veterans Affairs is at the center of a growing controversy over the improper treatment of veterans at VA hospitals. On June 16, CNN noted that a report released in June by the VA's Office of Inspector General showed only "about 42.5 percent of 42 VA facilities inspected without warning in May had standard operating procedures in place for the equipment being used and could demonstrate that their staffs had been trained to use the devices." In other words, more than half of the institutions (57.5 percent) had improper procedures or training.

<More at: [www.thenewamerican.com/index.php/usnews/health-care/1292](http://www.thenewamerican.com/index.php/usnews/health-care/1292)>

### **VETERANS ADMINISTRATION PHYSICIAN ACCUSED OF BOTCHING CANCER TREATMENT**

Walter F. Roche Jr. - Tribune-Review - July 22, 2009

The expert assigned by the Veterans Administration to "touch up" the treatment of veterans given the wrong doses of radiation for prostate cancer in Philadelphia was accused in federal lawsuits of botching the radiation treatments for three of his patients.

Court records show Kent Wallner, the Seattle VA physician, was accused in lawsuits against the VA of causing extensive damage to three veterans being treated for prostate cancer. Two of the three cases were settled for \$1 million apiece. The third case was dismissed, and an appeal to the Supreme Court is being considered.

<More at [www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/s\\_634725.html](http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/s_634725.html)>

## **VA PHYSICIAN FIRED AFTER INVESTIGATION**

Martin J. Kidston - The Independent Record - July 10, 2009

FORT HARRISON - A doctor at the VA Medical Center accused of improperly conducting patient exams and fudging medical records to reflect care that was never provided was fired by the hospital based upon the findings of an investigation that started in 2008.

The VA Medical Center at Fort Harrison declined to confirm the doctor's name, but a spokesperson with the hospital said veterans once under the doctor's care were notified of the findings and assigned to another practitioner.

The doctor was terminated in March.

<More at: [www.billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/article\\_08e5b752-6d1a-11de-b86f-001cc4c002e0.html](http://www.billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/article_08e5b752-6d1a-11de-b86f-001cc4c002e0.html)>

## **VA HOSPITALS ROUTINELY OVERDOSE VETS**

Kimberly Hefling - July 12, 2009

Two years after an Iraq war veteran overdosed on medication at a Veterans Affairs facility, the problems blamed in his death have not been corrected at many of the VA's residential treatment sites, a government study found.

The VA's inspector general ordered the review as part of legislation passed to fix problems after the 2007 death of 27-year-old Justin Bailey in a Los Angeles residential facility. <More at: [www.capitolhillblue.com/node/18699](http://www.capitolhillblue.com/node/18699)>

## **VA TO PAY FOR TREATMENT FOR INFECTED VETERANS**

The Daily News Journal - July 9, 2009

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has agreed to cover costs associated with treatment and follow-up testing for infected veterans in the wake of the endoscopy problems at the Alvin York VA Hospital.

The statement came in response to Congressman Bart Gordon's June 18 letter, in which he requested the VA to give infected veterans the benefit of the doubt and pay in full for the care they need. <More at: [www.dnj.com/article/20090709/NEWS01/90709017/](http://www.dnj.com/article/20090709/NEWS01/90709017/)>

## **BACKLOG OF VA CLAIMS IN HOUSTON ONE OF HIGHEST**

The Associated Press - June 27, 2009

HOUSTON — Houston has one of the biggest backlogs and some of the longest waiting times in processing veterans' claims for disability benefits in the nation, according to the most recent data released by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Nearly 18,000 veterans are waiting for the Houston VA Regional Office to process their applications for disability benefits, the Houston Chronicle reported Saturday.

Also, 26 percent of those claims in Houston have been pending for more than half a year, compared to the national average of 21 percent.

"It perplexes me that people could get welfare in a much smaller time frame," a veteran said.

<More at: [www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/tx/6500860.html](http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/tx/6500860.html)>

## **III CORPS CHIEF TO HIS SOLDIERS:**

Michelle Tan

At ease One general's moves to balance soldiers' work and home life may prove to be a DoD role model

FORT HOOD, Texas — Not long after he took command of III Corps here last summer, Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch got an earful from the wife of one of his soldiers. "[She] said 'General, this dwell time is not working because my husband is not home anyway. You might as well have kept him in Iraq, because I don't see him. He gets home after the kids have gone to bed. He doesn't come home on the weekends,'" Lynch said.

"So we fixed all that." Now, soldiers assigned at one of the Army's most populous bases are expected by Lynch to be home for dinner by 6 p.m., leave work at 3 p.m. every Thursday to spend time with their families, and seek Lynch's approval for any weekend training. <More at: [www.hadit.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=29338](http://www.hadit.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=29338)>

## **FIGHTING FOR THEIR HOMES**

David Koepfel – Newsweek Web Exclusive – Jul 17, 2009

Congress approved half a billion dollars to help military families hammered by the real-estate crisis. Unfortunately, the money seems stuck in a bureaucratic delay.

In July 2007, Eddie Ortega, an Air Force firefighter with 10 years of military service, purchased his first home in Dover, Del., for \$175,000. Two years later he has received transfer orders to an air base in San Angelo, Texas, forcing him to short-sell his home for \$162,900, a 7 percent loss. The sale is still pending, and Ortega is waiting to find out if Bank of America will approve the deal before he moves to Texas at the end of July. <More at: [www.newsweek.com/id/207222](http://www.newsweek.com/id/207222)>

## **AND WE ARE CERTAIN THAT THIS WILL COME OFF WITHOUT A HITCH, AREN'T WE?**

### **NEW TRICARE CONTRACTORS FOR MILLIONS**

Tom Philpott - July 16, 2009

Six million military healthcare beneficiaries, those who live in TRICARE's North and South regions, will have new managed care support contractors and claim processors to deal with by April of next year.

In a surprise development, two of three current TRICARE contractors -- Health Net Federal Services and Humana Military Healthcare Services -- lost to rival firms in their bids to handle next-generation support contracts. The three contracts are worth a total of \$55.5 billion over five years. <More at: [www.military.com/features/0,15240,195077,00.html](http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,195077,00.html)>

### **DON'T WAIT FOR US TO DIE: GRANT ASSOCIATION TO AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE FOR PARKINSON'S, HEART DISEASE, HYPERTENSION**

Mokie Porter - Vietnam Veterans Of America - July 24, 2009

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - After reviewing scientific studies of the past few years, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences has determined there is "limited or suggestive evidence" of an association between Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease with exposure to Agent Orange. Full report at: [www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=12662#toc](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12662#toc)

<More at: <http://news.pnnewswire.com/ViewContent.aspx?ACCT=109&STORY=/www/story/07-24-2009/0005065795&EDATE=>>

### **IRAQ VETS' CAREGIVERS SEEK TRAINING, COMPENSATION**

Kimberly Hefling (AP) – 22 July 2009

WASHINGTON — On good days, Michelle Briggs has to remind her 40-year-old husband to shower and eat. On bad days, she lifts him out of bed and picks him up when he falls.

Robert W. Briggs, a former Army sergeant, was severely injured in Iraq and needs constant monitoring because of traumatic brain injury, blindness in one eye and paralysis on one side. He walks with the help of a service dog. Briggs gave up her job as a veterinarian technician to care for him and their two kids.

With tissue in hand, Michelle Briggs huddled Monday in a hotel conference room with 15 other caregivers who shared hugs and exchanged stories. They will go to Capitol Hill this week with a message to Congress: We need help.

<More at: [www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5h\\_JaSe3leHtKcyXqbNqiYIS4NWraD99IOS0G0](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5h_JaSe3leHtKcyXqbNqiYIS4NWraD99IOS0G0)>

### **VETERANS WITH PTSD AT HIGH RISK FOR DEMENTIA**

Paul Bright - SF Mental Health Examiner - July 13, 2009

A University of California- San Francisco study has shown a [positive correlation between veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\) and dementia](#). The study, led by Professor of Psychiatry Dr. Kristine Yaffe, analyzed records of over 180,000 veterans (127,000 with no PTSD and 53,000 with PTSD) that had no record of dementia between 1997 and 2000. Veterans were all over 55 years old, with the average age of 68 and nearly all male. [A similar study] suggested a reverse effect: [dementia may activate dormant PTSD](#).

<More at: [www.examiner.com/x-14054-SF-Mental-Health-Examiner-y2009m7d13-Veterans-with-PTSD-at-high-risk-for-dementia](http://www.examiner.com/x-14054-SF-Mental-Health-Examiner-y2009m7d13-Veterans-with-PTSD-at-high-risk-for-dementia)>

## **HOW MANY MORE WILL DIE BEFORE THIS STUDY IS FINISHED?**

### **'DREAM TEAM' OF RESEARCHERS TO STUDY ARMY**

Grafton Pritchatt - Jul 17, 2009

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, July 16, 2009) -- A ground-breaking study of behavioral health in the Army may soon provide answers on what causes suicide and what programs can best prevent them.

A media roundtable at the Pentagon Thursday provided an update on a five-year, \$50-million study of suicide and behavioral health among military personnel, launched in October 2008, in partnership with the National Institute on Mental Health.

<More at: [www.army.mil/news/2009/07/17/24526-dream-team-of-researchers-to-study-army/](http://www.army.mil/news/2009/07/17/24526-dream-team-of-researchers-to-study-army/)>

## TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

### NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF JULY 21, 2009

This week the Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard announced increases in activated reservists, while the Army and Marine Corps announced a decrease. The net collective result is 86 more reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 111,226; Navy Reserve, 6,514; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 16,498; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,313; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 702. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 143,253, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2009/d20090721nqr.pdf>

### OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY 24 JULY 2009

#### OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,319 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,328
WOUNDED US [7/4/09]	31,430
OTHER US CASUALTIES [7/4/09]	≥37,613
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [7/4/09]	191
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [7/24/09]	≥ 101,006 – 1,339,771
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [11/9/08]	≥ 400K – 1.374M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

#### OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,848 DAYS)

KILLED US	753
WOUNDED US [7/4/09]	3,162
OTHER CASUALTIES US [7/4/09]	8,068
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [7/4/09]	33
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED COALITION	513
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/4/2009)	≥ 7,589
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$667,376,572,348
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$222,739,958,016

*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

### NAVY VET HONORED, FOILED ISRAELI ATTACK

Ray McGovern - June 1, 2009

What's the difference between murder and massacre?

The answer is Terry Halbardier, whose bravery and ingenuity as a 23-year-old Navy seaman spelled the difference between the murder of 34 of the USS Liberty crew and the intended massacre of all 294.

The date was June 8, 1967; and for the families of the 34 murdered and for the Liberty's survivors and their families, it is a "date which will live in infamy" — like the date of an earlier surprise attack on the U.S. Navy.

The infamy is two-fold: (1) the Liberty, a virtually defenseless intelligence collection platform prominently flying an American flag in international waters, came under deliberate attack by Israeli aircraft and three 60-ton Israeli torpedo boats off the coast of the Sinai on a cloudless June afternoon during the six-day Israeli-Arab war; and (2) President Lyndon Johnson called back carrier aircraft dispatched to defend the Liberty lest Israel be embarrassed — the start of an unconscionable cover-up, including top Navy brass, that persists to this day.

Given all they have been through, the Liberty survivors and other veterans — who joined Halbardier to celebrate his belated receipt of the Silver Star — can be forgiven for having doubted that this day would ever come.

In the award ceremony at the Visalia (California) office of Rep. Devin Nunes, the Republican congressman pinned the Silver Star next to the Purple Heart that Halbardier found in his home mailbox three years ago.

Nunes said, "The government has kept this quiet I think for too long, and I felt as my constituent he [Halbardier] needed to get recognized for the services he made to his country."

Nunes got that right. Despite the many indignities the Liberty crew has been subjected to, the mood in Visalia was pronouncedly a joyous one of Better (42 years) Late Than Never. And, it did take some time to sink in: Wow, a gutsy congressman not afraid to let the truth hang out on this delicate issue. <More at: [www.consortiumnews.com/2009/06/0109a.html](http://www.consortiumnews.com/2009/06/0109a.html)>

## **ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST**

### **DISABLED VETS LOSING BENEFITS IN DIVORCE SETTLEMENTS**

Alberto Vargas - San Diego Community Issues Examiner - July 15, 2009

Across the country, unbeknownst to most Americans, many disabled veterans find themselves fighting a war they shouldn't have to be fighting and they need some help. The issue at stake is the inclusion of disability benefits in the calculation of divorce settlements, where judges – on many occasions – have ignored existing federal law (USC Title 38; Section 5301).

This federal law states:

"Payments of benefits due or to become due under any law administered by the Secretary shall not be assignable except to the extent specifically authorized by law, and such payments made to, or on account of, a beneficiary shall be exempt from taxation, shall be exempt from the claim of creditors, and shall not be liable to attachment, levy, or seizure by or under any legal or equitable process whatever, either before or after receipt by the beneficiary."

<More at: [www.examiner.com/x-11974-San-Diego-Community-Issues-Examiner-y2009m7d15-Disabled-vets-losing-benefits-in-divorce-settlements](http://www.examiner.com/x-11974-San-Diego-Community-Issues-Examiner-y2009m7d15-Disabled-vets-losing-benefits-in-divorce-settlements)>

### **NATIONAL VETERANS LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM (NVLSP) LAUNCHES LAWYERS SERVING WARRIORS™ PROGRAM**

The Lawyers Serving Warriors™ program offers pro-bono legal help to veterans serving in Iraq and Afghanistan facing administrative separation, going through a mental evaluation board or physical evaluation board, received an inappropriate discharge characterization, filed a claim with the VA for disability compensation, or having difficulty with a claim under Traumatic Servicemembers Life Insurance.

Veterans can request help at: [www.lawyerservingwarriors.com/mh\\_network.php](http://www.lawyerservingwarriors.com/mh_network.php)

Attorney's can volunteer at:

Lawyers Serving Warriors™

A Program of the National Veterans Legal Services Program

PO Box 65762

Washington, DC 20035

202-265-8305

Fax 202-328-0063

Email: [LawyersServing@nvlsp.org](mailto:LawyersServing@nvlsp.org) or [Tracy\\_Connor@nvlsp.org](mailto:Tracy_Connor@nvlsp.org)

### **VETERANS WHO COMMIT CRIMES: WHAT DO WE OWE THEM?**

Diane Dimond - June 24, 2009

In America everyone is supposed to be equal in the eyes of the law. But we've got a growing group, a particular class of defendants entering American courtrooms who I believe need special consideration. They are soldiers returning from war.

Several studies conclude that between 30% to 40% of the approximately 1.6 million vets of Iraq and Afghanistan will "face serious mental-health injuries" like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and problems from traumatic brain injuries.

Experts in the field report both those conditions are linked to anti-social and criminal behavior. <More at:

[www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-dimond/veterans-who-commit-crime\\_b\\_220480.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-dimond/veterans-who-commit-crime_b_220480.html)>



## **NEW EL PASO COUNTY COURT TAILORED TO HANDLE WAR FALLOUT**

Mike McPhee - The Denver Post - 07/22/2009

A new court that will open in El Paso County next month is designed to provide returning veterans accused of felonies with an alternative to the conventional justice system, which is not always sympathetic to combat-related brain injuries and stress disorders.

"It's based on drug court, where there are immediate consequences, with a lot of heavily supervised probation," said El Paso County District Judge Ron Crowder, a two-star general in the Colorado Army National Guard, a former paratrooper in Vietnam and holder of the Distinguished Service Medal. <More at: [www.denverpost.com/ci\\_12887568](http://www.denverpost.com/ci_12887568)>

**LOOKING FOR A JOB? IF YOU ARE GUARD OR RESERVE, THESE MAY BE THE ONES TO LOOK AT.**

## **DOD ANNOUNCES 2009 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE EMPLOYER SUPPORT FREEDOM AWARDS**

The Department of Defense announced today the 2009 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award recipients. The award represents the highest recognition given by the U.S. government to employers for their outstanding support of their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

The 2009 recipients are:

- AeroDyn Wind Tunnel LLC – Mooresville, N.C.
- AstraZeneca International – Wilmington, Del.
- Cambridge, MA Fire Department – Cambridge, Mass.
- Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Inc. – Westlake Village, Calif.
- First Data Corporation – Greenwood Village, Colo.
- FMC Technologies – Houston, Texas
- Jackson Parish Sheriff's Department – Jonesboro, La.
- Marks, O'Neil, O'Brien & Courtney, P.C. – Philadelphia, Pa.
- Microsoft Corporation – Redmond, Wash.
- Mid America Kidney Stone Association – Kansas City, Mo.
- NetJets – Woodbridge, N.J.
- Ohio Department of Public Safety – Columbus, Ohio
- Perpetual Technologies, Inc. – Indianapolis, Ind.
- Santa Ana Police Department – Santa Ana, Calif.
- TriWest Healthcare Alliance – Phoenix, Ariz.

<More at: [www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12830](http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12830)>

## **VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

In 2000, legislation was passed to create the Veterans History Project. It was intended to tap into and preserve the rich personal histories of our veterans with oral and written histories, preserved by the Library of Congress.

The Veterans History Project is a history project for all veterans and all veterans are encouraged to lend their voices and their stories. The web feature at the Library of Congress for the Veterans History Project is at

<http://www.loc.gov/vets>

## **DUPLICATE MILITARY RECORDS AVAILABLE**

July 17, 2009

Veterans may obtain duplicate copies of discharge or separation documents by completing forms found on the Internet at [www.archives.gov/research/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/research/index.html) and mailing or faxing them to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). Alternatively, write the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 63132-5100.

Specify that a duplicate separation document is needed.

<More at: [www.thespectrum.com/article/20090717/NEWS01/907170304/Veterans++Focus](http://www.thespectrum.com/article/20090717/NEWS01/907170304/Veterans++Focus)

## 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 [scCook@vuft](mailto:scCook@vuft); I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

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EDITOR'S NOTE: I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with the effect of Legislative or Executive inaction or bad actions that adversely affect our target group. I try not to pick those articles that have already been beaten to death in the regular press, but rather try to bring the reader articles that he or she might not run across in another medium. While we are non-partisan, I do not believe articles critical of government actions to be partisan as long as they are accurate and fair. Criticism, like dissent, is fair. Finally, I screen hundreds of articles for inclusions and for every article I include, I throw five or six away – good articles, but not as important as the ones selected.

I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. [Sandy Cook](#), Editor

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

The phone is covered by a voice recorder 24 hours a day. We'll get back to you ASAP.