

SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 1

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 AUGUST 2007

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

A DEBT UNPAID ~ OR IS IT EVEN OWED?

What does the nation owe its soldiers in the modern, volunteer forces? [By “soldiers” I mean all of the serving military, any component, any gender.]

If we were to answer that question based on politicians’ rhetoric, it would be, “parades, cookies, and memorials.”

If we were to answer that question based on today’s non-volunteer citizens’ most often heard responses, it would be, “Not much. They volunteered didn’t they?”

To determine what we owe, we must answer honestly another cluster of questions:

1. What is the nature of service today, and did it change with the 1973 conversion to an all-volunteer force?
2. Is a soldier’s service dependent upon the objective of the call to arms?
3. Once called, are all soldiers equal?

Let’s deal with those first.

1. I hold that the nature of service has not changed at all. The method of acquisition of soldiers has certainly changed – there is no more active draft. The living conditions have changed as the services try to make serving more attractive. Certain other enticements to enlist have been added since there is no more compulsion to serve. But defining service using only those criteria is like defining an automobile by its paint color and upholstery and leaving out the fact that it carries passengers and self-propels from point A to point B. Both definitions are accurate, but seriously incomplete.
2. Soldiers volunteer to serve, often before the call to arms. Whatever that call, whoever makes it, and for whatever purpose, when the call comes they go. The purpose, while it may honor or shame the nation, is yet the nation’s purpose, and their service is exceptional regardless of the national purpose.
3. John Milton said, “He also serves who only stands and waits.” If soldiers are called to fight, or if they are called to support the fighters, or if they are called to replace the fighters in some safe job, while the fighter goes into harm’s way – in every case, they serve as their country has asked them to serve. Service in the active military in any capacity, regular or activated

guard or reserve, is equal as service to the nation. In all cases, the call came, the soldiers answered, and they served wherever their nation needed them.

The British Army says in writing what they owe their soldiers.

Soldiering - The Military Covenant (Army Doctrine Publication Volume 5)

Soldiers will be called upon to make personal sacrifices - including the ultimate sacrifice - in the service of the Nation. In putting the needs of the Nation and the Army before their own, they forego some of the rights enjoyed by those outside the Armed Forces. In return, British soldiers must always be able to expect fair treatment, to be valued and respected as individuals, and that they (and their families) will be sustained and rewarded by commensurate terms and conditions of service. In the same way the unique nature of military land operations means that the Army differs from all other institutions, and must be sustained and provided for accordingly by the Nation. This mutual obligation forms the Military Covenant between the Nation, the Army and each individual soldier; an unbreakable common bond of identity, loyalty and responsibility which has sustained the Army throughout its history.

http://www.army.mod.uk/servingsoldier/usefulinfo/valuesgeneral/adb5milco/vss_hpers_values_adb5_0_w.html

Not bad. So, if you agree that our soldiers today are the nation’s most devoted and most hazarded public servants, just as they have been in all past wars, and that they make a sacrifice that is beyond that asked of the ordinary citizen, then can we not agree that they are owed something for their service far beyond what is owed those who never put their lives on the line?

Can’t we agree that, by virtue of their service, they have earned lifetime medical care far more than have the congresspersons who quibble over their benefits while pledging rhetorical support?

Can’t we agree that they deserve better pay and allowances than the bureaucrats who slow-roll their support, and better than those who have “better things to do with their lives”?

Can’t we agree that enlisting young men and women, training them to kill, and subjecting them to months of repetitive uncertainty and

stress, changes them forever, and it is our demand for their service that has brought about that change, thus we are responsible?

Can't we agree that their families, who share in their sacrifice, deserve all of the attention that Lincoln called for when he said that we must, "*care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.*"?

Can't we agree that for this extraordinary request that we make to them, and for their exceptional response, they deserve the best the nation has to offer. Not just a "fair shake" or a "level playing field" or an "equal chance", but the best, the most we can do for them.

Can't we agree that, at the least, they deserve to have the promises that we have already made to them kept without reservation?

Ultimately, can't we agree that for this grand offer that they make to us, we will never send them to defend us unless we know that there is a real threat, and that that threat is of such magnitude that the future of the nation depends on their making such a sacrifice?

They stand for us.

Can't we stand up for them? [Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

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

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT WWW.VUFT.ORG.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

THE FIGHT IS ON! The [law suit](#) that we have filed along with Veterans for Common Sense against the Veterans' Administration proceeds. Here is an extract of the update that we have received from Morrison Foerster and Disability Rights Advocates (DRA), our two law firms: ... "1. The Complaint has been served on all the various defendants. 2. A lawyer with the Department of Justice in DC (Stephen Y. Bressler) has filed his appearance as the lawyer for the defendants. As the case goes on, it would not surprise us if additional lawyers appeared for the defendants. 3. The day after the filing of the Complaint, we filed a motion to have the case transferred to a different judge who has heard a veteran's case previously and who we think would be more familiar with the underlying facts. The defendants have opposed our motion and we should hear from the court with a decision within the next several weeks. ... in a case of this magnitude, relatively long periods of time may elapse during which there is no apparent court activity. For example, we may not get an actual response from the defendants (probably a motion to dismiss) until at least late September (because the court rules allow them that much time)."

<Time magazine has an article on the suit at www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1646753,00.html>

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

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

WE NEED YOUR HELP. VUFT is a no-fee organization. We still do not intend to charge annual membership fees, but 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 expect to incur expenses in support of the case, to include travel expenses should we need to testify. 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

A letter from Ronnie Bowman: he cites a letter he received from the VA which say that some of you may be getting more money: "...Public Law 107-314, section 636, as amended by P.L. 108-136, section 641, which established Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) entitlement and Public Law 107-107, section 641, as amended by P.L. 108-375, section 642, which established Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) entitlement have been amended. Retired military members who have previously received or are currently receiving CRSC and/or CRDP can now have their entitlement(s) recalculated based on retroactive ratings awarded by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). Because of these amendments, we are performing a review of all potential accounts ... You may or may not be due money from DFAS or the DVA or in some cases both."

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

HARE INTRODUCES BIPARTISAN BILL TO SUSPEND, REVIEW PERSONALITY DISORDER DISCHARGES

Washington, Jul 25 - Congressman Phil Hare (D-IL), a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, along with Congressman Ray LaHood (R-IL), Congressman Joe Crowley (D-NY), and Congressman Hank Johnson (D-GA), today introduced the Fair Mental Health Evaluation for Returning Veterans Act [[H. R. 3167](#)][—](#)a bill to require the Department of Defense (DOD) to place a temporary moratorium on personality disorder discharges until a comprehensive review of DOD mental health policies is conducted by an independent review board. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) has introduced a companion bill in the Senate. <See article below in "Tattoo – Current Issues" on this problem.>

MEDICARE PAYMENT FIX GETS BOOST

The House passed the Children's Health and Medicare Protection Act of 2007 on Aug. 1. The Medicare part of the bill would include a block of the 9.9 percent cut in Medicare and TRICARE payments to doctors currently scheduled by law for Jan. 1, 2008. In addition, it would institute small increases in the payments for 2008 and 2009, forestalling the annual battle that doctors face each year as they decide whether they can afford to take new Medicare or TRICARE patients. Unfortunately, the bill also contains a number of controversial provisions, including reduction of payments to Medicare HMO plans, so it could face a presidential veto. Furthermore, the Senate version of the bill does not contain a provision to cancel the slash in doctors' payments. The clock is ticking for Medicare and TRICARE doctors who say they can't afford the proposed cuts. <More at: www.fedweek.com/content/ci/afn.php>

THE STATES STILL DO MORE THAN THE FEDS

TRICARE PHYSICIAN TAX BREAKS

Stagnant physician reimbursement rates paid by TRICARE over the past few years have made finding a physician who will accept TRICARE more difficult in many locations. The State of Oregon has taken a novel approach to improve that situation for TRICARE patients. Governor Ted Kulongoski recently signed a new Oregon state law that will provide tax credits for doctors that see TRICARE patients. <More at: www.oregonlive.com/news/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/news/1185945923298030.xml&coll=7>

VETERAN'S COMMITTEE PASSES A \$1 BILLION CUT IN WARTIME ELDERLY, POOR, DISABLED VETERANS' BENEFITS

August 3, 2007

Washington, D.C. — Steve Buyer (R-Ind.), ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, issued the following message today to veterans regarding legislation that would eliminate special monthly pensions for severely disabled veterans over 65 who are also receiving pensions for wartime service. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/07/hcva07/hcva080307-1.htm>

ADMINISTRATION FIGHTS DEM PLAN TO BOOST SCHOOL AID FOR VETS

Alexandra Bahou and Anna Schechter - August 09, 2007:

The Bush administration opposes a Democratic effort to restore full educational benefits for returning veterans, according to an official's comments last week. Senate Democrats, led by Virginia's Jim Webb, want the government to pay every penny of veterans' educational costs, from tuition at a public university to books, housing and a monthly stipend.

... Keith Wilson, the VA official who oversees the education benefits program, told senators last Friday the proposal would make "administration of this program cumbersome," and its costs would "tax existing VA resources."

<More at: <http://blogs.abcnews.com/theblotter/2007/08/administration-.html>>

NO HELP FOR PTSD, BUT NOW WE CAN SALUTE THE FLAG. WOW! THANKS JIM!

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe (R-Okla..) today praised the passage by unanimous consent of his bill (S.1877) clarifying U.S. law to allow veterans and servicemen not in uniform to salute the flag.

RETREAT – NEWS

ARMY'S 'DEBT OF SERVICE' LEAVES VETS PERPLEXED

Kirstin Cole - Reporting

CBS) NEW YORK Servicemen and women who made huge sacrifices fighting in the war and now paying yet another price, even after coming home. One soldier in particular is currently battling against a new "debt of service." Brian Rodriguez is a fighter, an honorably discharged soldier who'd been deployed in Iraq.

"I was a combat engineer," Rodriguez said. "We deal with land mines, explosives."

He fought for his nation, only to return to his homeland and wage a fresh battle. Former Army Specialist Rodriguez started getting bills for \$700 for lost or damaged government property this summer. Although he was discharged some four years ago, bills recently arrived demanding payment, but giving no details on what or why -- nor do they offer a way to dispute the charges.

<More at: http://wcbstv.com/local/local_story_204222600.html>

EXTENDED IRAQ ROTATIONS TO CONTINUE

Associated Press - August 15, 2007

Fort Hood, Texas - U.S. soldiers deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan will be facing the extended 15-month deployments until at least next June, a top Army commander said Tuesday. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,145908,00.html>

FATIGUE CRIPPLES US ARMY IN IRAQ

Exhaustion and combat stress are besieging US troops in Iraq as they battle with a new type of warfare. Some even rely on Red Bull to get through the day. As desertions and absences increase, the military is struggling to cope with the crisis

<More at: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/world/story/0,,2147052,00.html>>

PENTAGON JUNKING MILLIONS IN GEAR

Associated Press | July 23, 2007

WASHINGTON - Millions of dollars' worth of gear, including combat boots, helmets, vests and aircraft parts, is being junked by the Pentagon rather than stored or sold as surplus to suppliers who sometimes sell it back to the military. Of roughly \$1.8 billion worth of equipment the Defense Department downgraded to scrap from January through June, at least \$330 million worth came from categories of gear the Pentagon most frequently buys back from surplus dealers, according to the National Association of Aircraft & Communication Suppliers. Those include parts for aircraft, weapons and communications systems, the group said.

<More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,143337,00.html>

MILITARY FAMILIES FACE DEPLOYMENT STRESS

Audrey Mcavoy - 08.11.07 - Schofield Barracks, Hawaii -

Frequent and extended troop deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan are stressing not only those on the battlefield but also their families at home. ...

"They're exhausted, they're frustrated at the lack of predictability in their lives, especially with the extensions. Every deployment gets harder and harder," said Joyce Raezer, head of the National Military Families Association in Alexandria, Va.
<More at: www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2007/08/11/ap4010804.html>

TRICARE EYES FEWER 'PRIME' NETWORKS

Tom Philpott | August 17, 2007

Some Tricare Prime Networks Seen Too Costly To Keep

More than 168,000 TRICARE Prime enrollees -- those in managed care networks set up more than 40 miles from a military base or a base closure site -- could lose access to those networks and therefore pay higher out-of-pocket costs under new TRICARE support contracts to take effect in 2009. <More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,146137,00.html>

ARMY CUTS TIME SPENT ON TRAINING

Bryan Bender - Globe Staff - August 19, 2007

FORT MONROE, Va. -- The US Army, struggling to cope with stepped-up operations and extended deployments of its soldiers to Iraq, has shortened the duration of several of its bedrock training courses so that troops can return to fighting units on the front lines more quickly <More at: www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2007/08/19/army_cuts_time_spent_on_training/>

THIS, WHEN THE PRODUCER OF THE UP-ARMORED HUMVEE SAYS THAT THEY ARE RUNNING THE PRODUCTION LINE AT NOWHERE NEAR CAPACITY

PENTAGON MISSES DEADLINE ON PROVIDING MINE-PROOF VEHICLES

The Pentagon expects to deliver only 1,500 mine-proof armored vehicles to Iraq by the end of the year, less than half the number promised a month ago, a spokesman said Wednesday. Press secretary Geoff Morrell said the Pentagon will not be able to meet its goal of delivering 3,500 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles by the end of the year.
<More at: www.capitolhillblue.com/cont/node/3224>

TWO STORIES FROM CBS THAT REFLECT THE STATE OF RECRUITMENT

EXCLUSIVE: GANGS SPREADING IN THE MILITARY

July 28, 2007 - (CBS)

U.S. Army Sgt. Juwan Johnson got a hero's welcome while home on leave in June of 2004.

"Not only did I love my son - but my god - I liked the man he was becoming," his mother, Stephanie Cockrell, remembers. But that trip home was the last time his family saw him alive. When Johnson died, he wasn't in a war zone, he was in Germany.

... On July 3, 2005, Sgt. Johnson went to a park not far from his base in Germany to be initiated into the 'Gangster Disciples,' a notorious Chicago-based street gang. He was beaten by eight other soldiers in a "jump-in" - an initiation rite common to many gangs. ... Johnson died that night from his injuries. His son, Juwan Jr., was born five months later.

<More at: www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/07/28/eveningnews/main3107316.shtml>

ARE GANG MEMBERS USING MILITARY TRAINING?

July 28, 2007 - (CBS)

Like most American cities, Columbia, South Carolina, has its share of problems, but nothing prepared the Sheriff Leon Lott for what his department discovered last August. Four U.S. Marines -- who proudly snapped pictures of each other -- were recruiting local kids, some as young as 13, into the Crips street gang. The leader was a lance corporal.

<More at: www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/07/29/eveningnews/main3108597.shtml>

HAVE THEY FORGOTTEN?

VFW, AMERICAN LEGION BACK IRAQ WAR

Bryan Bender - Globe Staff - August 16, 2007

WASHINGTON -- The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the nation's oldest and most influential veterans' organizations, have broken their relative silence on the merits of the Iraq war, joining some of the staunchest war supporters to lobby Congress and the public to give the military "surge" more time to work.

This month, the American Legion issued an "action alert" to its three million members, declaring "the war in Iraq is not lost." Last week, the commander of the VFW, Gary Kurpius, reported that troops he met on a recent fact-finding trip to Iraq want "a little more time and patience" for the stepped-up US offensive to succeed. "We owe them that much," he said.

>More at: www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2007/08/16/vfw_american_legion_back_iraq_war>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
8/25		Fairbanks, AK	Resource Fair	Nancy Smoyer	907-456-4238
8/25-27		Compton, CA	Stand Down	Ivan Mason	310-864-7008
8/28	1100 - 1500	Radisson Martinique On Broadway Hotel 49 west 32nd Street, NY, NY	Career Fair		212-736-3800
8/30	1100 - 1400	Radisson Hotel Valley Forge 1160 First Avenue King Of Prussia, PA	Career Fair		610-337-2000
9/5	1100 - 1400	Radisson Hotel Boston 200 Stuart St, Boston MA	Career Fair		617-482-1800
9/5 - 8		20 Patton Cove Road Swannanoa, NC	Wall that Heals	Smoky Mountain Harley Owners Group	
9/8-10		Menlo Park, CA	Stand Down	Kate Severin	650-804-7194
9/8		Billings, MT	Resource Fair	Lori Hartford	406-896-0584
9/13-9/16		Sycamore Park Sycamore, Illinois	Wall that Heals	Viet Now Dekalb County Chapter	
9/14		Sacramento, CA	Stand Down	Dan Reich	916-904-2240
9/14		White City, OR	Stand Down	Kathleen Patterson	541-665-5001
9/14		Indianapolis, IN	Resource Fair	Charles Haenlein	317-951-0688
9/15		St. Louis, MO	Resource Fair	Kathryn Sturgeon	314-615-7623
9/15		Colville, WA	Resource Fair	Ken Walden	509-685-6140
9/18		Akron, OH	Resource Fair	Laura Dunlop	330-753-2129
9/18	1100-1400	Fort Bragg Officer's Club Building 1-4930, Fort Bragg, NC	Career Fair		910-907-2582
9/20		Alexandria, LA	Resource Fair	Dorothy Thomas	318-473-0010
9/21		Fresno, CA	Resource Fair	Pam Beebe	559-287-3456
9/22		Eugene, OR	Resource Fair	David Stone	800-369-4283
9/25	1100-1400	Radisson Hotel Norfolk 700 Monticello Ave., Norfolk, VA	Career Fair		757-627-5555
9/26		Lakeworth, FL	Resource Fair	Linda Graham	561-422-6870
9/27-30		Presbyterian College Clinton, SC		Laurens County Veterans Affairs	
9/28		Springfield, MA	Stand Down	Gumersindo Gomez	413-731-0194

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

WAR VETERAN WHO CAN'T GET CITIZENSHIP

August 22, 2007

One of the surest paths to citizenship is to enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces and fight in a foreign war. Sergeant Ramdeo Singh, a Queens resident who treated wounded American soldiers as an Army nurse at Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo in 1999, says he picked the wrong war. Last week, a federal judge in Brooklyn ruled that Sergeant Singh's service in Kosovo does not qualify him for automatic citizenship, even though noncitizens who have fought in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001, or those who fought in the Persian Gulf War between 1990 and 1991, do qualify. <More at: www.nysun.com/article/61004?page_no=1>

THIS ONE FLOORS ME! "EVERY TIME THE WIND BLOWS" WE BURY ANOTHER AMERICAN!

GOLD STAR MOTHERS DENIES MEMBERSHIP TO FOREIGN WOMAN

Jim Fitzgerald - Associated Press

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. Everyone agrees that Ligaya Lagman is a Gold Star mother, part of the long, mournful line of women whose sons or daughters were killed in combat for the U.S. armed services. Her 27-year-old son, Army Staff Sgt. Anthony Lagman, was killed last year in Afghanistan when his unit came under fire during a mission to drive out remnants of Taliban and al-Qaida forces. But the largest organization of such mothers, the American Gold Star Mothers Inc., has rejected Lagman for membership because, though a permanent resident and a taxpayer, she is not a U.S. citizen.

"There's nothing we can do because that's what our organization says: You have to be an American citizen," national President Ann Herd said Thursday. "We can't go changing the rules every time the wind blows."

<More at: www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,157839,00.html>

DISABLED IRAQ WAR VETERAN WAITS FOR BENEFITS

Kiley Miller – The Hawkeye

WEST BURLINGTON -- Billy Carter is not angry with the Veterans Administration. He is not angry with the Army. He just wants his neighbors to see, to understand, to feel for a moment what it means to be a veteran caught in limbo.

"It's kind of like you're in a convoy," Carter said Monday in an interview at the home of his fiancée's mother, "and you get a flat tire and the rest of the convoy drives off and leaves you."

Now unemployed and living part-time in a rental house without running water in Fort Madison, the former member of the Iowa Army National Guard's 224th Engineer Battalion began the process of applying for disability benefits a year ago this month. He continues to wait for the first payment as his bills pile higher and his life unravels, and he said there are other Iraq war veterans in the area who share his plight. <More at: www.thehawkeye.com/Story/iraq_war_vet_080207>

VETERANS GET TRIPLE THE COMPENSATION WHEN THEY GET HELP FIGHTING VA BUREAUCRACY

Matthew D. LaPlante - Salt Lake Tribune - Aug 14, 2007

Within six weeks of arriving in Vietnam, Brent Messick had taken bullets in his chest and stomach and fragmentation in his right arm and hand. ... without someone to help him navigate the complex bureaucracy of the federal Veterans Affairs benefits system, Messick languished for decades with only the minimal compensation he had been granted in the months after he returned from the war. ...the V.A. initially rated his long-term disabilities at 0 percent.

"...the system [is] so adversarial and complex that veterans need help from outside groups to obtain just compensation for their wounds. ... The process is so involved and complicated, that ... we encourage everyone to get assistance from a service organization." <More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/articleid/8245>>

LOCAL VETERAN ASKED TO LEAVE VA HOSPITAL

10:20 PM CDT on Tuesday, July 31, 2007

(KMOV)- One local veteran is painting a grim picture of his treatment at a local VA hospital. Something no returning veteran would expect. He tells News 4 that he walked into the emergency room and was asked to leave. ... even after showing his valid veterans affairs ID card. Scheinberg did return with his discharge papers. And some 9 hours after first entering the hospital, left with one pill for pain. <More at: www.kmov.com/localnews/stories/kmov_localnews_070731_veteran.ce688b70.html>

REST ASSURED, IT IS NOT ONLY VETS WHO GET STIFFED BY THE VA

VA TURNS AWAY CARDIAC VICTIM

William R. Levesque - July 25, 2007

ST. PETERSBURG - The man had suffered a heart attack in a building about 200 feet from the bustling emergency room at Bay Pines VA Medical Center. But when Bay Pines worker Mark A. Surette collapsed on June 26, Pinellas paramedics weren't sure where to take him. Surette wasn't a veteran. So the county asked Bay Pines if its emergency room would treat him. The response: Go to St. Petersburg General Hospital, 3 miles away. Surette, 51, of St. Petersburg died.

<More at: www.sptimes.com/2007/07/25/Southpinellas/VA_turns_away_cardiac.shtml>

DO THE MATH! 650K/STATE ~ 260K/ORGANIZATION ~ \$123.50/HOMELESS VET*

VA ANNOUNCES \$24 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR HOMELESS PROGRAMS

WASHINGTON, DC – Homeless veterans in 37 states will get more assistance, thanks to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) selection of 92 community organizations to receive funds for transitional housing this year. A list of recipients is posted on the VA website at: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/Homeless-Grants.asp>.

*See the homeless figures on the National Coalition for Homeless Vets site at: <http://www.nchv.org/page.cfm?id=81>

AND HERE'S ONE REASON THEY COULDN'T AFFORD MORE ~ ONCE AGAIN!

VETERANS AGENCY MISSING MILLIONS IN IT EQUIPMENT

Grant Gross - IDG News Service - July 24, 2007

Department of Veteran Affairs can't account for dozens of computers and hard drives containing personal information on U.S. military veterans

A government audit of four U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) centers found \$6.4 million worth of missing or misplaced IT equipment, according to a report released Tuesday. Inventories in fiscal years 2005 and 2006 found about 2,400 missing IT devices at the four VA locations, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report said. Among the missing items were dozens of computers that could have stored personal information. The GAO also found computer hard drives being disposed containing the names, Social Security numbers, or medical histories of hundreds of U.S. military veterans.

<More at: www.infoworld.com/article/07/07/24/veterans-agency-missing-IT-equipment_1.html>

AND THEY ARE MAKING SURE THEY WON'T NEED AS MUCH IN THE FUTURE

TREATING THE TRAUMA OF WAR – FAIRLY

Judith Schwartz – Christian Science Monitor - August 20, 2007

The high incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among soldiers returning from Iraq is one of the many "inconvenient truths" of this war. Inconvenient largely because it is costly: The most effective and humane means of treating PTSD are time-intensive and long-term. The military, however, has changed the terms and given many thousands of enlisted men and women a new diagnosis: "personality disorder." While the government would be obliged to care for veterans suffering from combat-related trauma, a personality disorder – defined as an ingrained, maladaptive way of orienting oneself to the world – predates a soldier's tour of duty (read: preexisting condition). This absolves Uncle Sam of any responsibility for the person's mental suffering.

<More at: www.csmonitor.com/2007/0820/p09s02-coop.html>

AND THE ARMY IS HELPING TOO

MOST STRESS CASES MISSED

Lisa Chedekel - Courant Staff Writer - August 6, 2007

Only about 3 percent of soldiers who have served in combat since 2003 have been diagnosed by the Army with post-traumatic stress disorder - far fewer than the numbers who have screened positive for PTSD symptoms in recent Army studies, suggesting that the disorder is being under-reported and under-diagnosed. <More at: www.courant.com/news/local/hc-ptsd0806.artaug06.0.2250078.story>

GET THIS REPORT! READ IT!

"Beyond the Call of Duty: A Comprehensive Review of the Overuse of the Army in Iraq": by Lawrence Korb, Peter Rundlet, and Max Bergmann with Sean Duggan and Peter Juul ~ Center for American Progress

"The active Army is about broken." Colin Powell on Face the Nation 7 December 2006

<Report available at: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/08/pdf/readiness_report.pdf>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF AUGUST 22, 2007

This week, the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Coast Guard announced a decrease, while the Air Force number increased. The net collective result is 55 more reservists mobilized than last week. At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 78,172; Navy Reserve, 5,608; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 6,366; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,910; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 307. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been mobilized to 96,363, including both units and individual augmentees.

A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Aug2007/d20070822ngr.pdf>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 24 JULY 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,637
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	26,558
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	≥27,689
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	116
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	4
KILLED UK	163
KILLED OTHER COALITION	129
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 7/20]	696
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 46,529
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 74,336[LANCET-753,209]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+[LANCET - 1,335,776]
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [5/15]	1.2M/2.15M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	412
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/23]	6,213
KILLED COALITION (6/2007)	278
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (6/2007)	834
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.4M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE [7/10]	\$446,008,388,000

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

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

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

AFTERTHOUGHTS

A TRIBUTE TO SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN CREATED BY 15 YEAR OLD LIZZIE PALMER ~ WELL WORTH THE TIME

http://www.youtube.com/jp.swf?video_id=ervaMPt4Ha0&eurl=&iurl=http%3A//img.youtube.com/vi/ervaMPt4Ha0/default.jpg&t=OEgsToPDskL3L6b_uy2d7Xg8nxgCLLbz&autoplay=1

A CANADIAN ASKS A GOOD QUESTION

WHEN DID YOU STOP COUNTING? AMERICA'S DEAD HIT THE BACK PAGE

July 30, 2007

This past month, another six Canadian troops were killed in southern Afghanistan, their armored vehicle blown up by Taliban insurgents just outside Kandahar city. The six soldiers who perished; Cpl. Jordan Anderson, Cpl. Cole Bartsch, Master Cpl. Colin Bason, Capt. Matthew Johnathan Dawe, Capt. Jefferson Francis, and Pte. Lane Watkins brought Canada's total deaths in the country to 66 since the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The vast majority of these, 48, have been in the past two years, since Canadian forces left the safety of Kabul to assume a more active combat role in Afghanistan's hostile south.

As has been the case with each combat death sustained by Canadian troops, their faces and stories plastered the front pages of national and local newspapers and TV networks in the days after they perished. Their names echoed from car radios and in the coffee shops of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

... Notice of casualties in the American media have become so commonplace they are almost forgotten. Television news might include them at the end of the broadcast, briefly, in silence, without commentary. They are no more than photos. We do not know when they died, or how, or with whom, or under what circumstances. The barest of information is given, and then the screen fades to black. <More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/david-sax/when-did-you-stop-countin_b_58317.html>

SIX YEARS ON, AND AFTER THE WORST SUICIDE RECORD EVER

VA'S SUICIDE HOT LINE BEGINS OPERATIONS

July 30, 2007

WASHINGTON – To ensure veterans with emotional crises have round-the-clock access to trained professionals, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun operation of a national suicide prevention hot line for veterans.

The toll-free hot line number is 1-800-273-TALK (8255). <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/07/vap07/vap073007-1.htm>

SOME MORE GREAT PLANNING

RUNNING SHORT ON PURPLE HEARTS

Steve Benen - August 17th, 2007

Nyles Reed, a 75-year-old Texan, sustained injuries during combat in Korea in 1952. Last week, the Pentagon sent him a letter to let him know he qualifies for a Purple Heart. But the Defense Department didn't actually *give* Reed a Purple Heart; it just sent him a certificate saying he'd earned one. The mailing included a notice explaining that the medal for injured troops was "out of stock."

<More at: www.crooksandliars.com/2007/08/17/running-short-on-purple-hearts/>

NOTICE

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

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

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

ADD-ON ~ ANOTHER SHOW WORTH WATCHING

WAR'S CHILLING REALITY

Bob Herbert

Bryan Anderson, a 25-year-old Army sergeant who was wounded in Iraq, was explaining, on camera — to James Gandolfini, of all people — what happened immediately after a roadside bomb blew up the Humvee that he was driving.

"I was like, 'Oh, we got hit. We got hit.' And then I had blood on my face and the flies were landing all over my face. So I wiped my face to get rid of the flies. And that is when I noticed that my fingertip was gone. So I was like, 'Oh. O.K.'"

"So that is when I started really assessing myself. I was like, 'That's not bad.' And then I turned my hand over, and I noticed that this chunk of my hand was gone. So I was like, 'O.K., still not bad. I can live with that.'"

"And then when I went to wipe the flies on my face with my left hand, there was nothing there. So I was like, 'Uh, that's gone.' And then I looked down and I saw that my legs were gone. And then they had kind of forced my head back down to the ground, hoping that I wouldn't see."

HBO's contribution to an expanded awareness of the awful realities of war continues with a new documentary, "Alive Day Memories: Home From Iraq."

Mr. Gandolfini, one of the executive producers of the film, steps out of his Tony Soprano persona to quietly, even gently, interview 10 soldiers and marines who barely escaped death in combat.

The interviews are powerful, and often chilling. They offer a portrait of combat and its aftermath that bears no relation to the sanitized, often upbeat version of war — not just in Iraq, but in general — that so often comes from politicians and the news media.

Dawn Halfaker, a 28-year-old former Army captain, is among those featured in the documentary. She lost her right arm and shoulder in Iraq, along with any illusions she might have had about the glory of war.

"I think I was a little bit naïve to what combat was really like," she told me in an interview on Sunday. "When you're training, you don't really imagine that you could be holding a dying boy in your arms. You don't think about what death is like close up."

"There's nothing heroic about war. It's very tragic. It's very sad. It takes a huge emotional toll."

Still, she said, there was much about her experience in Iraq that she was grateful for.

"Nobody in the film is asking for pity or sympathy," she said. "We're just saying we had this experience and it changed our lives, and we're coping with it."

The term "alive day" is being used by G.I.'s to refer to the day that they came frighteningly close to dying from war wounds, but somehow managed to survive. There are legions of them.

Miraculous advances in emergency medicine, communication and transportation are enabling 90 percent of the G.I.'s wounded in Iraq to survive their wounds, although many are facing a lifetime of suffering.

It's become a cliché to talk about the courage of the soldiers and marines struggling to overcome their horrendous injuries, but it's a cliché embedded in the truth. Sergeant Anderson, a chatty onetime athlete, is doing his best to put together a reasonably satisfactory life without his legs or his left hand, and with a damaged right hand.

He told Mr. Gandolfini, "If I didn't have my hand, if I lost both my hands, I'd really think, you know, it wouldn't be worth it to be around."

He has a wry take on the term "alive day."

"Everybody makes a big deal about your alive day, especially at Walter Reed," he said. "And I can see their point, that you'd want to celebrate something like that. But from my point of view, it's like, 'O.K., we're sitting here celebrating the worst day of my life. Great, let's just remind me of that every year.'"

Last year HBO produced a harrowing documentary called "Baghdad E.R." that showed the relentless effort of doctors, nurses and other medical personnel to save as many lives as possible from what amounted to a nonstop conveyor belt of G.I.'s wounded in combat. At the time, Shelia Nevins, the head of documentary programming at the network, said, "We tried to put a human face on the war."

They've done it again with "Alive Day Memories," which is scheduled to premiere Sept. 9.

There are no politics in either production. They are neither pro- nor anti-war.

But the intense focus on the humanity of the men and women caught up in the chaos of Iraq, and the incredible sacrifices some of them have had to make, is an implicit argument in favor of a more thoughtful, cautious, less hubristic approach to matters of war and peace.

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