

# SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 2

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

*“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”*

10 SEPTEMBER 2007

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

### ALL THE PROTECTION THE LAW ALLOWS? ~ RIGHT!

In 1994 the Congress passed the [Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act](#) (USERRA); it was updated in 1996 and 1998. The purpose of the act is:

“§ 4301. Purposes; sense of Congress

(a) The purposes of this chapter are--

- (1) to encourage noncareer service in the uniformed services by eliminating or minimizing the disadvantages to civilian careers and employment which can result from such service;
- (2) to minimize the disruption to the lives of persons performing service in the uniformed services as well as to their employers, their fellow employees, and their communities, by providing for the prompt reemployment of such persons upon their completion of such service; and
- (3) to prohibit discrimination against persons because of their service in the uniformed services.”

In 2003 Congress passed the [“Servicemembers Civil Relief Act”](#) (SSCRA), a restatement and updating of the old Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act”. The intent of Congress is stated in Section 2:

- “(1) to provide for, strengthen, and expedite the national defense through protection extended by this Act to servicemembers of the United States to enable such persons to devote their entire energy to the defense needs of the Nation; and
- “(2) to provide for the temporary suspension of judicial and administrative proceedings and transactions that may adversely affect the civil rights of servicemembers during their military service.”

Good, brief explanations of the details are available for [USERRA](#) and [SSCRA](#). In the broadest sense:

- USERRA protects your employment and protects you from discrimination because you are in the service – any component
- SSCRA makes it possible for you to serve without losing leases, eases the burden of installment contracts, and can even, in some cases, give relief from judicial proceedings.

So why aren't these laws working for many veterans (see related stories later in this issue)?

A law does not work if it cannot work on a human scale. Years of waiting for resolution doesn't help if you need a paycheck this Friday.

Statistics are not people. The government touting reduced response time (whether true or false) by 10% doesn't help the veteran who is at the wrong end of the distribution. People are not “means and medians”.

No matter how much a free-marketer you are, business concerns must not trump human concerns, and the law should apply equally to all.

Finally – the veteran does deserve special treatment. By virtue of his or her honorable service, his or her needs are more important than the needs of those who stayed home and sacrificed nothing.

Unfortunately, neither the Department of Labor nor the Department of Justice see it that way. They give more credence to an employer's unsupported claim of irreparable harm to his business than they do to the veteran's legitimate claim under the law.

Back from Iraq? Want your job back? The USERRA protects you, doesn't it?

Wait just one minute, buster! That law apparently only applies to you if your former employer says that it does.

Don't worry. We have set up appropriate alternatives. You lost your job as a \$25/hour tradesman because your former employer didn't want to give it back? We have a job for you providing in-home care of the elderly at \$9/hour. Or another as a management trainee at McDonalds.

Don't like that? Then appeal to the Department of Labor. Oh, wait a minute. Sorry. Your former employer sent in a fax saying that rehiring you would destroy his business (Did he prove it? He isn't required to.) Since he sent us the fax we have to turn this over to the Department of Justice. They'll get back to you in 30 months.

And don't forget, that relief of your mortgage and your credit debt under the SSCRA while you were activated has expired, so pay that mortgage you qualified for under your previous employment or we'll take your house; you don't expect us to let a mortgage company lose money do you? What kind of an American are you?

So, thanks for your service, and have a nice day.

## 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](http://www.vuft.org). We have revised it [oops! had a glitch – it will be updated by mid-week] and are regularly adding useful references.

### **GETTING HELP TO THOSE WHO NEED IT**

Many sites provide links to national organizations that help veterans. We believe that the best help comes at the local level. Sometimes this help comes from local chapters of national organizations, but more than likely it is from a group of local citizens, incorporated or loosely organized, who just plain want to help, and are willing to take the time and make the sacrifice to help out. These local organizations are hard to ferret out, but if you have them in your area, you know who they are.

Help us to start cataloging these local and regional groups across the nation. If you know of a group, or are the member of such a group, let us know and we will enter your group into our registry. The registry is open only to groups or agencies who will help veterans and their families without profit. If there are charges, let us know that also so that we can make your entry in the registry complete. The registry will be available to all who access our website.

## 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 slowly. The government's lawyer has been named, but the response is not due until later this month.

**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](mailto:rhandy@vuft.org) or the Vice Chair at [scok@vuft.org](mailto:scok@vuft.org). Watch for details at [www.vuft.org](http://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.

***WE HAVE A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY!***

**A MEMBER HAS OFFERED TO MATCH YOUR DONATION, DOLLAR- FOR-DOLLAR, UP TO \$1,000, BETWEEN NOW AND THANKSGIVING.**

***IT'S TIME TO PITCH IN!***

## MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

No letters this issue

## RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

### IT AIN'T MUCH, BUT IT'S SOMETHING

#### SENATE: STOP ROUNDING DOWN VETERAN CHECKS

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Sep 6, 2007

The Senate voted Thursday to stop reducing veterans' disability checks by rounding the monthly payments down to the next lowest dollar. The result would add, at most, slightly less than \$12 a year to the paychecks of disabled veterans. But it is symbolically important, said the chief sponsor, Sen. Bernard Sanders of Vermont, a political independent and member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The practice of rounding down checks began years ago as a budget-cutting measure and has continued, even during times of budget surpluses, because few complaints have been heard. For low-income veterans, even \$12 a year is important, Sanders said. More important, he added, is the fact that the government has been saving up to 99 cents a month by rounding down checks at the same time it spends billions on contracts for Iraq that often are awarded without even seeking lower bids.

<More at: [www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2007/09/military\\_roundingdown\\_disabilitychecks\\_070906w/](http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2007/09/military_roundingdown_disabilitychecks_070906w/)>

### THERE IS A LITTLE BIT OF LEGISLATIVE ACTION

We can't get HR 1041 (Full funding of Veterans Healthcare) out of committee, but at least the VA budget was increased in the current funding resolution HR 2642, which increased the VA and military construction budgets by \$4B over the President's request, with . The bill is pending resolution in committee over several Senate amendments. The White House has threatened a veto.

### JIM NICHOLSON'S PARTING GIFT TO VETERANS

#### VA CHIEF: DO NOT INCREASE VA BUDGET, PASS IT

Rick Maze - August 31, 2007

The Department of Veterans Affairs does not need more money; it just needs a budget to quickly pass Congress, VA Secretary Jim Nicholson said in a letter to key lawmakers. <More at: [www.federaltimes.com/index.php?S=3006640](http://www.federaltimes.com/index.php?S=3006640)>

### AS USUAL, SOME STATES TRY HARD TO FILL IN THE HUGE GAPS IN BENEFITS CAUSED BY FEDERAL INACTION ~ WOULD THAT ALL WOULD DO SO

#### STATES RUSH TO HELP TROOPS, FAMILIES

Tim Martin - The Associated Press - August 25, 2007

LANSING, Mich. -- When Michelle Engel returned from a trip to Florida to help her sick mother, she found a leaking hot water heater in her home that had damaged drywall, carpeting and floorboards.

Her husband, John, and son, Michael, could not help \_ they were both stationed in Iraq with the Michigan National Guard. Another son, Joshua, was also unavailable. He was stationed with the Air Force in Japan.

But Engel did not have to deal with her damaged home in Reading entirely on her own. A fund set up in Michigan to help the families of National Guard and military reserve troops gave her \$1,700 to help with repairs.

Michigan is among more than 20 states that give military personnel and their families income tax breaks, college tuition help and emergency financial assistance as volunteer forces and National Guard troops are increasingly relied upon.

<More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/25/AR2007082500302.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/25/AR2007082500302.html)>

## RETREAT - NEWS

#### IRAQI FORCES NOT READY FOR PRIME TIME

Associated Press - September 06, 2007

WASHINGTON - Critical to U.S. plans for redeploying American troops from the battlefield, Iraq's security forces appear far from ready to take over the fight against al-Qaida and insurgents, an independent report concluded.

Retired Marine Corps Gen. James Jones, who led the 20-member panel studying Iraqi security forces, was to testify before Congress on Thursday. His report, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, said the Iraq's security forces would be unable to take control of their country in the next 18 months. <More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.148302.00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.148302.00.html)>

### **ARMY ORDERS HUMVEE WINDOW KITS**

Stars and Stripes - August 31, 2007

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Army has ordered 1,000 kits for new windows that would allow troops to get out of Humvees quickly in an emergency, according to BAE Systems. The Vehicle Emergency Escape windows have a handle that troops can turn to unlock and pop them out in about five seconds, the company Web site says. The windows particularly come in handy when Humvees overturn or become submerged, said BAE Systems spokesman Ryan May. Up-armored Humvees are "a little top-heavy," so they have a tendency to tip over, May explained.

With the new windows, troops can get out of an overturned Humvee in about a minute, he said. The alternative in such situations is to rip off a Humvee door, which can weigh 500 pounds. He said the company expects to deliver the windows to the Army in early November. May could not say when they are expected to arrive downrange. [www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.147784.00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.147784.00.html)

### **ARMY'S \$20K BONUS ATTRACTING RECRUITS**

Associated Press - September 02, 2007

LEXINGTON, S.C. - Bored with life on his family's South Carolina horse farm, Willard McCormick decided that military service was the right plan for his future. And when the Army dangled its new, \$20,000 recruiting bonus in front of him, the decision got a lot easier.

"I wasn't going to go right away, but I heard about the bonus and decided to jump on it," McCormick, 19, said a couple of days after signing up.

... Since the bonus was unveiled in July, more than 6,200 recruits have signed up to begin basic training before Oct. 1, a move that boosts end-of-fiscal year recruiting numbers, Army officials said.

"People are calling here saying \$20,000 is more than they've made in the past two years," said Staff Sgt. Brent Feltner, 27, commander of a strip-mall recruiting station in this central South Carolina town. <More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=3549799>>

### **ARMY LOOKS TO NATIONAL GUARD FOR HELP**

Associated Press - August 28, 2007

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Army is turning to the National Guard for help recruiting would-be Soldiers in hometowns across America.

Army leaders, struggling to meet recruitment goals in the midst of a long and unpopular war in Iraq, are quietly working out final details of a program that would give bonuses of \$2,000 per recruit to any National Guard Soldier who brings somebody into the active duty Army.

Army Secretary Pete Geren disclosed the plan in an interview with The Associated Press, calling it an innovative effort to get broader reach into local communities. ... National Guard "recruiting assistants" already earn bonuses for signing up new members of the Guard, and one former Marine was so successful that he earned nearly \$100,000. <More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.147317.00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.147317.00.html)>

### **ARMY'S TOP GENERAL CONCERNED ABOUT STRAIN OF WARS ON NATIONAL GUARD AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Andrew O. Selsky - Associated Press - August 27, 2007

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Pentagon is asking National Guard troops and their families to make sacrifices like never before in Iraq and other hot spots, the Army's chief of staff told a conference bringing together citizen-soldiers from across the country.

Gen. George Casey – and others at the three-day gathering that ended Monday – acknowledged that the Guard's wider role puts unprecedented pressure on the lives, careers and relationships for troops once considered mostly weekend warriors.

>More at: [www.signonsandiego.com/news/military/20070827-1441-nationalguardatwar.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/military/20070827-1441-nationalguardatwar.html)>

### **U.S. SAYS COMPANY BRIBED OFFICERS FOR WORK IN IRAQ**

Eric Schmitt and James Glanz - August 31, 2007

WASHINGTON, Aug. 30 — An American-owned company operating from Kuwait paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes to American contracting officers in efforts to win more than \$11 million in contracts, the government says in court documents.

The Army last month suspended the company, Lee Dynamics International, from doing business with the government, and the case now appears to be at the center of a contracting fraud scandal that prompted Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates to dispatch the Pentagon inspector general to Iraq to investigate.

Court documents filed in the case say the Army took action because the company was suspected of paying hundreds of thousands in bribes to Army officers to secure contracts to build, operate and maintain warehouses in Iraq that stored weapons, uniforms, vehicles and other matériel for Iraqi forces in 2004 and 2005. A lawyer for the company denied the accusations.

One of the officers, Maj. Gloria D. Davis, a contracting official in Kuwait, shot and killed herself in Baghdad in December 2006. Government officials say the suicide occurred a day after she admitted to an Army investigator that she had accepted at least \$225,000 in bribes from the company. The United States has begun proceedings to seize Major Davis's assets, a move her heirs are contesting. <More at: [www.nytimes.com/2007/08/31/washington/31contract.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/31/washington/31contract.html)>

### **ACLU DOCS SHOW TROOP ABUSES**

Ryan Lenz - Associated Press - September 04, 2007

Newly released documents regarding crimes committed by U.S. Soldiers against civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan detail a troubling pattern of troops failing to understand and follow the rules that govern interrogations and deadly actions. The documents, released Tuesday by the American Civil Liberties Union ahead a lawsuit, total nearly 10,000 pages of courts-martial summaries, transcripts and military investigative reports about 22 incidents. They show repeated examples of Soldiers believing they were within the law when they killed local citizens. <More at: <http://news.findlaw.com/ap/o/632/09-04-2007/ba0e004d20de46b8.html>>

### **SOME FOLKS HAVE NO TROUBLE AT ALL GETTING THEIR BENEFITS!**

#### **MAN ADMITS LYING ABOUT MILITARY SERVICE TO GET BENEFITS**

Associated Press - September 1, 2007

SEATTLE — A 71-year-old man who claimed to be a decorated Korean War veteran pleaded guilty Friday in federal court to lying about his military service to get benefits and to wearing military medals he did not earn. Roy J. Scott of Port Angeles pleaded guilty to using an altered military discharge certificate to obtain Veterans Affairs compensation and medical benefits and to unlawfully wearing the military medals. ... Between 2000 and 2007, he received \$21,960 in VA medical benefits that he did not deserve, the U.S. Attorney's Office said. <More at: [http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/localnews/2003864240\\_webveteran01.html](http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/localnews/2003864240_webveteran01.html)>

### **TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
9/13-9/16		Sycamore Park Sycamore, Illinois	Wall that Heals	Viet Now Dekalb County Chapter	
9/14		Sacramento, CA	Stand Down	<a href="#">Dan Reich</a>	916-904-2240
9/14		White City, OR	Stand Down	<a href="#">Kathleen Patterson</a>	541-665-5001
9/14		Indianapolis, IN	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Charles Haenlein</a>	317-951-0688
9/15		St. Louis, MO	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Kathryn Sturgeon</a>	314-615-7623
9/15		Colville, WA	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Ken Walden</a>	509-685-6140
9/15		Bellingham, WA	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Lindsay White</a>	360-303-1933
9/18		Akron, OH	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Laura Dunlop</a>	330-753-2129
9/18	1100- 1400	Fort Bragg Officer's Club Building 1-4930, Fort Bragg, NC	<a href="#">Career Fair</a>		910-907-2582
9/20		Alexandria, LA	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Dorothy Thomas</a>	318-473-0010
9/20-22		Rock Island, IL	Stand Down	<a href="#">Sarah E. Oliver</a>	563-370-1779
9/21		Greensboro, NC	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Megan Kinnamon</a>	704-638-9000 x4567
9/21		Bellevue, KY	Resource Fair	Iola S. Green	859-572-6226
9/21		Fresno, CA	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Pam Beebe</a>	559-287-3456
9/22		Eugene, OR	Resource Fair	<a href="#">David Stone</a>	800-369-4283
9/22		Memphis, TN	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Ovul Ince</a>	901-523-8990 x7085

9/25	1100-1400	Radisson Hotel Norfolk 700 Monticello Ave., Norfolk, VA	<a href="#">Career Fair</a>		757-627-5555
9/26		Lakeworth, FL	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Linda Graham</a>	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
9/28	0830 - 1530	Sierra College, 5000 Rocklin Rd. Rocklin, CA	"The Road Home" From Combat to College & Beyond	<a href="#">Catherine Morris</a>	906-789-2879

**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**

### **COURT SAYS WHEN IN DOUBT, GIVE VETERANS THE BENEFIT**

Stephen Barr - September 5, 2007; D04

When in doubt, tilt toward the veteran.

That's what the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has suggested to government agencies in two cases involving federal employees who had served in the military reserves and petitioned for back pay because of improperly charged military leave.

The government has long encouraged civil service employees to join the National Guard and reserves, providing them with 15 days of leave for their annual military training. But agencies have not consistently interpreted the benefit, creating a muddle for judges and federal officials.

... even when not legally obligated to provide back pay, "agencies may resolve claims by providing more compensation than an individual has been able to prove," the court said.

Adopting such a stance is appropriate "as a matter of administrative convenience" when records of service time are incomplete, the court said.

"It also helps to ensure that veterans are appropriately given the benefit of the doubt" and "fully enjoy the presumption that veterans' benefits statutes are to be resolved in their favor," the court said.

<More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/04/AR2007090402027.html?nav=rss\\_politics/fedpage](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/04/AR2007090402027.html?nav=rss_politics/fedpage)>

### **IRAQ VETERAN SUES OVER SCHOOL JOB**

M.S. Enkoji - Bee Staff Writer - September 4, 2007

A soldier who served a tour of duty in Iraq and Kuwait claims that the Sacramento City Unified School District failed to give him his job back when he came home in July 2006, according to a federal complaint. Edward O'Gilvie said he was an assistant principal at Kennedy High School in December 2004 when he was called up for active duty.

"Because it's a public school district, I really didn't expect a problem with getting my job back," said O'Gilvie, 44. "I was hurt, shocked. It was the last thing I expected when I came back."

... O'Gilvie is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves. He previously had served 21 years in the military but never saw combat. He got his chance in December 2004. O'Gilvie had been an assistant principal at Kennedy High since August 2002, when he shipped out for a two-year tour.

When he came home early in July 2006, O'Gilvie said he was told there was no job for him and that the school district wasn't obligated to place him until December 2006, his original return date. <More at: [www.sacbee.com/101/story/358882.html](http://www.sacbee.com/101/story/358882.html)>

### **EMPLOYERS MORE RELUCTANT TO HIRE RESERVISTS**

Karen Jowers - Staff writer - Jan 19, 2007

Some employers, already pinched by mobilizations of workers who are in the National Guard or reserves, are saying privately they'll be reluctant to hire new employee-reservists.



Discriminating against someone because of their military obligations is illegal, but 51 percent of employers who responded to an informal, online poll by Workforce Management magazine said they would not hire an employee who is a citizen-soldier “if they knew that a military reservist or National Guard member could be called up and taken away from their job for an indeterminate amount of time,” as the question was posed. [www.airforcetimes.com/news/2007/01/tnsResemploy1.18/](http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2007/01/tnsResemploy1.18/)

### **VETERAN SAYS HE WAS FORCED OUT OF VA JOB**

May 11, 2007

(LEXINGTON, Ky.) -- A veteran of the Iraq war claims he was forced out of his job at a Lexington Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Forty-one-year-old Norman Perciful of Berea says he was given a choice of resigning or being fired after taking too much time off work to see V-A doctors for treatment of medical problems. <More at: [www.wave3.com/Global/story.asp?S=6474806](http://www.wave3.com/Global/story.asp?S=6474806)>

### **CANCER IN IRAQ VETS RAISES POSSIBILITY OF TOXIC EXPOSURE**

Carla McClain - Arizona Daily Star - 08.26.2007

After serving in Vietnam nearly 40 years ago — and receiving the Bronze Star for it — the Tucson soldier was called back to active duty in Iraq. While there, he awoke one morning with a sore throat. Eighteen months later, Army Sgt. James Lauderdale was dead, of a bizarrely aggressive cancer rarely seen by the doctors who tried to treat it. <More at: [www.azstarnet.com/metro/198240.php](http://www.azstarnet.com/metro/198240.php)>

### **US VETERANS CANCER DATA UNDER-REPORTED, MAKING NATIONAL DATA INCOMPLETE AND UNRELIABLE**

Medical News Today - 01 Sep 2007

As cancer information regarding American veterans is being under-reported, state and national data will be deficient and unreliable, messing up American cancer surveillance efforts, says a World Focus report in *The Lancet Oncology*, September issue.

According to a report obtained by *The Lancet Oncology*, there has been a steep fall in VA (Veteran Affairs) reporting of new cancer cases to California registries. In 2004 there were 3,000 cases, while by the end of 2005 the number dropped to almost zero. VA hospitals in other US states are inconsistent in their reporting, and have been so for a long time, making US-wide cancer rates seem lower than they really are. <More at: [www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/81276.php](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/81276.php)>

Complete report at: [www1.va.gov/cancer/docs/VHA\\_Directive\\_Cancer\\_Data\\_Release.pdf](http://www1.va.gov/cancer/docs/VHA_Directive_Cancer_Data_Release.pdf)

### **IS THE ARMY TRYING TO GET RID OF ‘DEAD WOOD?’**

Jodi Rave - Lee Enterprises - 08/25/07

It's been hell trying to save Private Ryan. Pfc. Ryan LeCompte, an Army scout, has been diagnosed by military and private doctors with post-traumatic stress disorder and a traumatic brain injury after serving two tours in Iraq with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. He came home with a wounded mind and a broken body.

Now senior officers want to get rid of him.

The 27-year-old Lakota warrior from Lower Brule, S.D., was a standout soldier, earning accolades for working “tirelessly, without complaint, despite the long hours and harsh conditions he faced,” according to a December 2003 award recommendation. He participated in more than 160 combat missions. He was an “unstoppable force” that “ranks him among the best in the Thunder Squadron.”

That was then. Now senior officers at Fort Carson, Colo., argue he should be kicked out of the military without benefits for misconduct, charges that include missing a unit formation and allegedly hitting two soldiers.

... In May, [Ryan's wife] Tammie LeCompte testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform during a hearing called “Invisible Casualties: The Incidence and Treatment of Mental Health Problems by the U.S. Military.” But the hearing didn't give her the platform to say what her life with Ryan was really like.

“I'm alone and fighting the U.S. Army,” she said last week.

She quit her job to take care of Ryan and five children. Money is so tight the family is eligible for food stamps. The soldier's wife recently sold their bedroom suite for \$600. The kids' beds are gone, too. Two months ago, Tammie sold the family living room set for \$900. <More at: [www.helenair.com/articles/2007/08/25/automotive\\_top/montana/c01082507\\_04.txt](http://www.helenair.com/articles/2007/08/25/automotive_top/montana/c01082507_04.txt)>

## **LAWMAKER SEEKS DE-BOOT CAMP AFTER TOUR**

Scott Sonner - The Associated Press - Aug 30, 2007

RENO, Nev. — The chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee said he will push Congress to open camps that may help prepare veterans for the difficult return to everyday life after deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan.

These “de-boot” camps, or “Heroes Homecoming camps,” could be made a mandatory part of active duty and include a soldier’s family, as well as other members of his unit, said Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif.

“When you leave the combat zone, you can be in Baghdad yesterday and tomorrow you are taking your kids to a soccer game. There is no time for decompression,” he said, pointing to high rates of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, increases in the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury and a skyrocketing suicide rate. “We’re releasing a time bomb to the community.” <More at: [www.airforcetimes.com/news/2007/08/ap\\_debootcamp\\_070830/](http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2007/08/ap_debootcamp_070830/)>

## **BETTER PAY FOR COMBAT-RELATED DISABILITIES?**

Tom Philpott - August 24, 2007

The Bush administration is preparing a legislative proposal to present to Congress in September that would establish a separate and, under most circumstances, a more generous disability package for service members who are injured in war or while training for war, sources said.

Under the plan, recommended by the Dole-Shalala commission, service members found unfit for duty as a result of combat or combat-training injuries, regardless of the number of years served, would qualify for an immediate lifetime annuity from the Department of Defense. <More at: [www.military.com/features/0,15240,146937,00.html](http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,146937,00.html)>

## **GINNIE MAE LIFTING VETERANS LOAN CAP**

Associated Press - 08.29.07 - NEW YORK -

The Government National Mortgage Association, or Ginnie Mae, is eliminating the cap on the size of certain government-backed mortgages it accepts, in a bid to boost low-cost financing for military veterans seeking to buy homes in pricey areas.

Starting Sept. 1, the federal agency will accept as collateral for its mortgage bonds "jumbo" loans of more than \$417,000 - the current limit - that are insured by the Department of Veterans Affairs. <More at: [www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2007/08/29/ap4066445.html](http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2007/08/29/ap4066445.html)>

## **VA RETRO PAY: \$150 MILLION AND CLIMBING**

Tom Philpott - August 31, 2007

Almost 75,000 military retirees with disabilities who were underpaid for months or even years after becoming eligible for one of two “concurrent receipt” programs have received their long-awaited retroactive payments, say officials in charge of the “Retro Pay” program. <More at: [www.military.com/features/0,15240,147657,00.html](http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,147657,00.html)>

## **TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS**

### **NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES MOBILIZED AS OF SEPTEMBER 5, 2007**

This week, the Army and Navy announced a decrease, while the Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard number increased. The net collective result is 285 fewer 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 of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 77,234; Navy Reserve, 5,523; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,061; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,926; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 309. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been mobilized to 96,053, 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/Sep2007/d20070905ngr.pdf>



**OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2007**

**OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM**

KILLED US	3,762
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	169
KILLED OTHER COALITION	129
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	1,001
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,419
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 78,065[ LANCET-753,209]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+[ LANCET- 1,335,776]
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [ 7/29]	1.5M/2.35M

**OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM**

KILLED US	440
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 12/2]	7,334
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	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE [8/9]	\$450,129,706,858

*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

### DID YOU KNOW?

USERRA does not just apply to the Guard and Reserve. Anyone who holds a job and who wishes to go into the Armed Forces, and who notifies his or her employer that he or she will be leaving to enlist, falls under USERRA.

### ACCORDING TO A LAW FIRM THAT SPECIALIZES IN EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS CASES:

The only instances in which you can deny reemployment to a returning service member are listed below.

1. Circumstances of the company/business operations have so changed as to make it impossible or unreasonable to reemploy the returning vet.
2. Helping the vet to become qualified for reemployment would pose an undue hardship. However, you must first attempt reasonable efforts, such as training, to help the person become qualified.
3. The employee worked in a temporary position and did not have a reasonable expectation of continued employment indefinitely or for a significant period.
4. The reemployment documentation doesn't pass muster (e.g., leave exceeded five years; employee was dishonorably discharged).

### NEVER MIND ALL THAT BORING, UNIMPORTANT ADMINISTRATIVE STUFF LIKE JOBS, AND MEDICAL CARE. LET'S GET STRAIGHT ON THOSE CRITICAL "MORAL" ISSUES!

#### MILITARY PANEL OKS SKIN MAGS

30/08/2007

Washington - A Pentagon panel decided this week that the sale of popular skin magazines Playboy and Penthouse can continue on US military bases, ruling that their contents are not "sexually explicit".

The decision came after a challenge from various concerned citizens charging that by selling the porn publications, the military was in violation of a decade-old US law.

The 1996 "Military Honor and Decency Act", passed by Congress in 1996, prohibits the sale of "sexually-explicit material", including any film or magazine "which depicts or describes nudity - including sexual or excretory activities or organs - in a lascivious way".

But individuals and groups active in anti-pornography and anti-sexual exploitation efforts complained in a letter that such off-colour reading materials are freely sold at US military installations.

In their letter, dated May 4 2007, they complained about "pornography's destructive impact" on military marriages and families.

US undersecretary of Defense Leslye Arshnt wrote this week in a letter that after a careful review of the materials, a Pentagon committee has ruled that there is nothing sexually-explicit about publications like "Nude Playmates" and "Celebrity Skin".

"The sale of these magazines on DoD (Department of Defense) property is permissible," the review board ruled.

However, the panel determined that a handful of magazines and videos -including such titles as "Wet" and "Blonde and Beyond" - would be banned from Pentagon shelves in the future.

Arshnt added that the Pentagon panel would undertake an "expeditious review" of other X-rated materials, including publications like "Playboy's Vixen", "Curves", and "XXX". [www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0..2-10-1462\\_2174548.00.html](http://www.news24.com/News24/World/News/0..2-10-1462_2174548.00.html)

### **WHAT DO YOU SAY TO YOURSELF IN THE MIRROR EACH MORNING WHEN YOU PREPARE TO SIT ON A "SKIN MAG" PANEL, WHILE YOUR PEERS ARE IN COMBAT IN IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN?**

### **DO YOU GET AROUSED WHEN YOU CONTEMPLATE THE APPROACHING "EXPEDITIOUS REVIEW" OF ALL THAT X-RATED NASTY STUFF, OR DO YOU JUST HOPE THAT THIS IMPORTANT JOB WILL JUICE UP YOUR CAREER (NO PUN INTENDED)?**

## 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](mailto: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 ~ FOR ALL OF YOU WHO WONDER HOW DOD WILL FILL ITS RANKS

### ALL OF YOU RETIREES HAD BETTER GET YOUR UNIFORMS OUT OF MOTHBALLS

Another significant difference between military retirement, and civilian retirement, is that a retired military member can be recalled to active duty. According to [Department of Defense \(DOD\) Directive 1352.1](#):

- *Involuntary Order to Active Duty. The Secretary of a Military Department may order any retired Regular member, retired Reserve member who has completed at least 20 years of active military service, or a member of the Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve to active duty without the member's consent at any time to perform duties deemed necessary in the interests of national defense in accordance with 10 U.S.C. 683 (reference (b)). This includes the authority to order a retired member who is subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) to active duty to facilitate the exercise of court-martial jurisdiction under Section 302(a) of reference (b). A retired member may not be involuntarily ordered to active duty solely for obtaining court-martial jurisdiction over the member.*

In all honesty, however, the chances that a military retiree would be recalled to active duty after age 60, or who have been retired for more than five years, are slim. DOD categorizes retirees into three categories, with category I as the most likely to be recalled to active duty, and category III as the least likely. Individuals over the age of 60 are in category III, which is the same category as individuals with disabilities. Recall of category III retirees is extremely unlikely. According to DOD, the categories are:

- Category I. Nondisability military retirees under age 60 who have been retired less than 5 years. E1.1.3.2.
- Category II. Nondisability military retirees under age 60 who have retired 5 years or more.
- Category III. Military retirees, including those retired for disability, other than categories I or II retirees (includes warrant officers and health care professionals who retire from active duty after age 60).