

SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 3

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 SEPTEMBER 2007

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

ONE LAYMAN'S TAKE ON A SERIOUS QUESTION [Which I Am Unqualified to Answer, by Definition]

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) sucks; obviously as a mental condition, but more importantly as a descriptor for what our young men and women are going through.

The name for this condition that most accurately describes what is happening to our soldiers is “Soldier’s Heart”, the term used during and after the Civil War. This is not a sterile, clinical “disorder”, it is an agony of their essential character.

Youngsters growing to adulthood, about ready to complete themselves as adult human beings, are diverted from what they thought they would be, to whatever war makes of them. A month after they are wondering who to call or text and hook up with for some fun, they are being taught to kill-or-be-killed. Everything moral and ethical that they learned as children and adolescents is, if not thrown out completely, at least brought into serious question, and there really is no time and no one gives them permission to question it.

Their lives are halted, diverted, changed, and then we expect that they will, upon their return – maybe only days after they are actively in combat – continue smoothly from the stage of life they were in when they left us. When we send off that 18-year old high school graduate who we do not yet trust to buy alcohol, or even that 23-year old college graduate who we do not yet trust to run the simplest of businesses, we don’t hit the || “pause button” in their lives. They continue to grow and develop, but hardly along the lines that they and we envisioned for them when they were young.

Most often when they come home we (professional counselors, family, friends) tell them that if they just settle down – “deal with it” – all will be well. My question is, “For whom?” For them? What if they can’t “deal with it” very readily? So many of them seem to be asking, “Why can’t I be what I was?” We ignore the question, offer no answers, and tell them to, “suck it up.”

Or do we make this appeal for us, so that we don’t have to face the fact that we have changed thousands of our fellow citizens forever, and definitely not for the better? If we don’t face it, we don’t have to own it.

Of course that adage that serving in the military is a great place to “grow up”, to “learn responsibility”, to “be a man” (sorry ladies), worked great in the Cold War. When the shooting started in Vietnam we started to see a different result than the one we lived with comfortably for so many years. But then Vietnam went away and we dropped back into

the same old rut. We acted as if we were sending them off to Webelos summer camp, and we largely were.

The way we treat those returning now – if we examine what we are doing honestly – seems to be designed to relieve us of guilt rather than to alleviate their pain.

Maybe that’s why we call it “PTSD”. It impersonalizes it, doesn’t it? And by not calling it what it really is, which is “*Combat Stress-Induced Personal Moral Anguish*” (as good a lay term as I could come up with), we can make it a comfortably neutral term.

“Post-traumatic stress” can have, after all, a broad range of stimuli, can’t it? Almost hit by a car? PTSD. Barely escape a home fire? PTSD. Mugged and robbed? PTSD. Any trauma that is stress-inducing (and I can’t think of any but the most simple that don’t induce stress in some form) is a precursor of PTSD.

By calling it a “disorder” we imply that it is something for which the individual soldier is responsible. After all, mental “disorder” can only happen to an individual, can’t it? The reverse of the coin is that we can claim that we train soldiers to keep themselves and their minds “in order”; therefore, if they are now in a state of “disorder”, it is probably their own fault.

Because we call it a “disorder” it is very easy to slip over the line and call it a “character flaw” or “fault”, after which it is very easy to posit that it might even be “pre-existing”. And once we can say that we have exonerated ourselves completely. How bloody convenient!

What we fail to address is that most of this is far from being any kind of “disorder”. For most sufferers it is the “ordered” and some would even say the expected response of normal human beings to abnormal circumstances. We do not raise our children to accept battle and mayhem as being normal, no matter how many violent video games we buy them. We do not raise them to consider killing others or being in constant 24-hour-a-day fear as normal. So what would a normal reaction be? In extraordinarily simple terms – if I swing a roundhouse at your nose and you flinch, that is not a stress-induced abnormality! If you didn’t flinch then we would all say that you were nuts! If I send you into death and destruction and you don’t react in some predictably adverse way – if you accept it all calmly – then you are probably a psychopath.

There was a time when we taught that being a warrior was an honored calling, bringing praise to the individual and glory to the nation. Many societies still teach that the warrior learns things that no one else knows, and serves his people by returning and teaching them the wisdom, patience, compassion, restraint, and understanding that he or she learned in fighting the war. Now we teach that to be a warrior is to be like a Viking berserker, and that a true warrior takes no chances and shows little restraint. He or she is not required to understand the "enemy", only to spot the "enemy" as a target. Nothing seems to trump "search and destroy", no matter what it is called today. Blind obedience without the exercise of judgment is rewarded. And we wonder why they come home changed – damaged – "disordered"?

Shortly after the start of this current war we began to hear [faint] calls that there was insufficient funding to take care of the returning wounded. As the flow increased the calls got louder. For some reason the administration and many in Congress have resisted these calls, succumbing only enough to partially increase the funding (after decreasing it substantially), and patting themselves on the back about the "percentage of increase" without ever dealing with the true subject of insufficiency.

Even if I could determine how to write a new law covering only the treatment of *Combat Stress-Induced Personal Moral Anguish*, that law would be dealing only with the symptoms not the cause. The cause cannot be dealt with except through abstinence from war. When war happens, so does *Combat Stress-Induced Personal Moral Anguish*, the one always accompanies the other. We will not change that unless and until we abjure war.

Yet we know that war can come to us again, although many of us believe that we should never take war to others. We did not fight Japan until Japan attacked us directly. We did not even declare war on Germany, although she had attacked many of our friends; Germany declared war on us. To protect ourselves we must have a trained military, even if it is just a cadre upon which to build a people's army in the event of an attack. War remains inevitable at some times in the future, hopefully less and less as time goes on, but man has not yet changed so much that war will disappear any time soon.

I would gladly support a law that says that Congresspersons who ignore or give away their obligations and responsibilities under Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution be charged with dereliction,

if not treason. Under my law, if they give away their responsibility for dealing with war and our military forces to another branch of government, they would be imprisoned at hard labor for the duration of the war that they allowed to occur, as having violated their oath of office and their solemn pledge to the people.

I could also support a law that said to the Congress, "Regardless of administrative estimates, you must include the cost of long-term physical and mental care for every person in uniform as an intrinsic part of the cost of going to war, and you must unconditionally reserve the funds at the outset to cover those expenses."

Finally I could write a regulation for the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration that says simply, "If a single soldier complains of mental or physical difficulty, you will presume the truth of the claim and treat that soldier or veteran without question immediately, and for as long as is medically necessary."

You and I could write or support all of these laws because we already know full well that they are necessary to the health of the nation, and to the health of our returning warriors.

I owe much of what is here to a rather remarkable book: [Tick, Edward. *War and the Soul*. 1st ed. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2005.](#) I do not personally subscribe totally to the spiritual thread in the book, as he apparently is a theosophist and I am not. I am, however, indebted to Dr. Tick for a new understanding of why our youngsters are suffering *Combat Stress-Induced Personal Moral Anguish* now, and why they will continue to suffer as they age, and why you and I are forever responsible.

In conclusion I offer this brief quotation from that book:

"... the moral responsibility for a war must ultimately fall not on the common soldiers who fought it but upon the nation and its leaders who created it ... [who must] also accept responsibility for [the warriors'] deeds during war and their condition afterward. ... Given our nation's denial of responsibility and disowning of suffering, the only socially acceptable role left for [the profoundly changed warrior] to collapse into is that of 'disabled veteran'. It is this abandonment of them [by our society], as much as the war experience, that causes PTSD."

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

JOB OPENINGS

Our good friends at Swords to Plowshares in San Francisco have four job openings: Webmaster/ Communication Specialist; Project Assistant, Iraq Veteran Project and the Coalition for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans; and, two Program/Policy Associate, Iraq Veteran Project/Coalition for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans. "OIF/OEF or other era veteran status is highly desirable. As is some knowledge of the issues, resources and obstacles facing OIF/OEF veterans."

If you are interested you can contact VUFT at contact@vuft.org for copies of the job announcements, or write or call directly to the Project Director at:

Amy N. Fairweather, J.D.
Iraq Veteran Project Director
Swords to Plowshares
1060 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415)252-4787 ext.356
fax (415) 552-6267

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. 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. There is a [new Q & A on the lawsuit](#) on our website.

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.

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

TELL YOUR TALE

I'd like to invite the members of Veterans United for Truth and readers of your newsletter to share stories and memories on "Saluting America's Veterans" (<http://www.americanprofile.com/veterans/>), a new site where veterans, as well as their friends and families, can post personal stories, photos, and videos documenting their war experiences.

The site launched this week in conjunction with "The War," the new Ken Burns documentary that tells the story of WWII from the perspective of four hometowns. It's intended to become a "living museum," a firsthand memorial dedicated to veterans of all wars and all military branches. I hope you'll encourage your members and readers to participate.

Gretchen Griffin
MKPR
212.627.8098

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

CHAIRMAN AKAKA'S FLOOR STATEMENT EXPLAINING "BY REQUEST" LEGISLATION

September 12, 2007

Many vets got up in arms about the introduction of legislation (S. 2026 on Agent Orange) from the White House by Senator Akaka, Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. Here is his explanation (edited to eliminate "legispeak").

... periodically the administration sends forward to the Congress legislation for consideration. ... the chairman, as a courtesy to the administration, introduces such bills on a "By Request" basis. This is a courtesy that has generally been extended to every administration and by every chairman, regardless of the party affiliation of the administration or chairman ... , I introduce such legislation without including any statement or explanatory materials. I do so for the express purpose of both accommodating the administration and ensuring that others are aware of the proposed legislation so that they might analyze it and, if they wish, comment upon it. ... I am committed to the development of the best possible policy in the area of veterans issues and I firmly believe that this goal is most successfully achieved with the free exchange of ideas, not by stifling different points of view.

RETREAT - NEWS

EXPERT: MILITARY WENT TO WAR; COUNTRY DIDN'T

Sandra Lilley - NBC News - Sept. 19, 2007

Yawning gulf seen between perspectives of military families, general public

Question: It seems that even though we're at war, most of us go about our daily lives as if it is not happening. Is the "disconnect" between military families and the general population as extreme as it appears? Answer: Yes. The big difference is the American military has gone to war and the country has not. In past wars everyone was asked to sacrifice, whether it was through taxes, bonds, rationing — even bringing in peach pits and rendering fat — and most importantly, sacrificing sons through conscription. Now, the sacrifice has been placed solely on military families.

...Q: In your research, have you found that men and women in uniform feel they have support, or do they feel like they are on their own? A: They feel alone to some degree. ... I'm afraid they feel victimized by the American government. The feeling is well placed. The government has abandoned our veterans.

Q: How so? A: The men and women in uniform swear to support the Constitution and they take an oath to do what the government sends them to do without making judgments of rightness or wrongness. What is first and foremost on the military's mind is keeping alive. However, the men and women in uniform feel their contract with the government should require that they get what they need to prosecute the war it sends them to fight and help them when they come home.

When soldiers got to Iraq, many felt they weren't given what they needed and asked their own families to do what they could. There wasn't enough body armor. Soldiers were writing home to their wives and asking for flak jackets. Families shouldn't have to do that. Take all the IED attacks on Humvees that were not built to withstand this. IEDs are not new. The Vietcong used IEDs in Vietnam; they have been around for decades. They are made from unexploded ordnance. We should have anticipated that (they) would be used against us and we should have had vehicles that were equipped for them. <More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20742327/>

'HELP WANTED' AD BELIES REPORT ON IRAQ SECURITY BY WALTER PINCUS

Washington Post - September 17, 2007; Page A17

A week ago today, Gen. David H. Petraeus started his rounds on Capitol Hill, reporting that security in Iraq was improving to the point that a small number of troops could begin coming home by year's end. But 10 days ago, his commanders in Baghdad began advertising for private contractors to work in combat-supply warehouses on U.S. bases throughout Iraq because half the soldiers who had been working in the warehouses were needed for patrols, combat and protection of U.S. forces.

"With the increased insurgent activity, unit supply personnel must continue to pull force protection along with convoy escort and patrol duties," according to a statement of work that accompanied the Sept. 7 request for bidders from Multi-National Force-Iraq. <More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/16/AR2007091601341.html>

US MILITARY LIKELY TO BE IN IRAQ FOR YEARS AFTER DRAWDOWN

Jim Mannion - Sep 15, 2007

The US military will be tied down in Iraq with 100,000 troops at least through the presidency of George W. Bush, and a modest size residual force will be there for years to come. And that is a best-case scenario, as articulated by US Defense Secretary Robert Gates on Friday after Bush announced plans for more modest troop cuts by mid-July. ... US force levels would go down to about 100,000 troops, or from 20 combat brigades to 10, by the time a new president takes office in January 2009.

<More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20070915/wl_mideast_afp/usiraqilitary_070915012207>

\$6 BILLION IN CONTRACTS REVIEWED, PENTAGON SAYS

Eric Schmitt and Ginger Thompson - September 21, 2007

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20 — Military officials said Thursday that contracts worth \$6 billion to provide essential supplies to American troops in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan — including food, water and shelter — were under review by criminal investigators, double the amount the Pentagon had previously disclosed. In addition, \$88 billion in contracts and programs, including those for body armor for American soldiers and materiel for Iraqi and Afghan security forces, are being audited for financial irregularities, the officials said.

Taken together, the figures, provided by the Pentagon in a hearing before the House Armed Services Committee, represent the fullest public accounting of the magnitude of a widening government investigation into bid-rigging, bribery and kickbacks by members of the military and civilians linked to the Pentagon's purchasing system. Until the hearing on Thursday, the Army's most detailed public disclosure about the scale of the problem was that contracts worth \$3 billion awarded by the Kuwait office were under review. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2007/09/21/washington/21contract.html>

GATES URGES VETO OF TROOP-REST MEASURE

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Sunday he would recommend a veto of a Senate proposal that would give troops more rest between deployments in Iraq, branding it a dangerous "backdoor way" to draw down forces....

"If it were enacted, we would have force management problems that would be extremely difficult and, in fact, affect combat effectiveness and perhaps pose greater risk to our troops," he said. <More at: www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-09-16-us-iraq_N.htm>

MILITARY SUED OVER RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

John Milburn - Associated Press Writer - September 19, 2007

FORT RILEY, Kan. (AP) - A soldier whose superior prevented him from holding a meeting for atheists and other non-Christians is suing the Defense Department, claiming it violated his right to religious freedom.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Kan., alleges a pattern of practices that discriminate against non-Christians in the military. It was filed Monday to coincide with the 220th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution.

The lawsuit names Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Maj. Paul Welborne as defendants.

According to the filing, Spec. Jeremy Hall, a soldier assigned to Fort Riley's 97th Military Police Battalion, received permission to distribute fliers around his base in Iraq for a meeting of atheists and non-Christians.

When he tried to convene the meeting, Hall claims, Welborne stepped in, threatening to file military charges against Hall and block his reenlistment. <More at: www.guardian.co.uk/world/latest/story/0,,6932235,00.html>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
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
9/28	0830 - 1530	Sierra College, 5000 Rocklin Rd. Rocklin, CA	"The Road Home" From Combat to College & Beyond	Catherine Morris	906-789-2879
10/2-5		Dixon, CA	Stand Down	Patrick Stasio	707-344-3743
10/4		Port Angeles, WA	Resource Fair	John Braasch	360-457-2112
10/5-6		Cedar Rapids, IA	Resource Fair	Don Tyne	319-892-5160
10/6-7		Libby, MT	Resource Fair	Allen Erickson	406-756-7304
10/8-9		Algonquin, IL	Resource Fair	Kathy Chwedyk	866-338-4968
10/10		Grand Rapids, MI	Resource Fair	G. Luke Carter	616-588-2200
10/11-14		Shore Acres Park, Chillicothe, IL	Wall that Heals	Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall Project	
10/12-14		Nashville, TN	Stand Down	Bill Burleigh	615-321-3919

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

URGENT! GUARD AND RESERVE MEMBERS MUST TAKE ACTION TO "MAKE THE SWITCH" TO RESTRUCTURED TRICARE RESERVE SELECT

September 12, 2007 07-58

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – National Guard and Reserve members currently in the TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) health care plan must sign up for the restructured TRS by Sept. 30, 2007, in order to continue their coverage. Effective Sept. 30, the "old" TRS ceases to exist. A restructured TRS begins Oct. 1, 2007. <More at: www.tricare.mil/pressroom/news.aspx?fid=314>

TRICARE FOR ANY VET FOUND 'UNFIT'

Tom Philpott - September 20, 2007

Bush to Seek Lifetime TRICARE for Medically 'Unfit' Vets

The Bush administration will ask Congress to provide lifetime TRICARE coverage to any service member discharged as "unfit" due to service-related physical or mental health conditions, said Donna Shalala, co-chair of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. The TRICARE change will be one of the most expensive initiatives in a legislative package the White House will send to Congress by the end of September. The package is to implement key recommendations of the wounded warrior panel, also known as the Dole-Shalala Commission.

The TRICARE proposal, if enacted into law, would open military healthcare to a wave of new beneficiaries, potentially as many as 9,000 to 10,000 newly-disabled veterans each year plus their families. <More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,149951,00.html>

VA STUDIES: PTSD CARE INCONSISTENT

Chris Adams - McClatchy Newspapers - September 12, 2007

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs, which touts its special programs to treat post-traumatic stress disorder in returning soldiers, spends little on those programs in some parts of the country, and some of its efforts fail to meet some of the VA's own goals, according to internal reports obtained by McClatchy Newspapers. [COMPARE: San Jose \$215/patient ~ Bronx, NY \$2521/patient].

In fiscal year 2006, the reports show, some of the VA's specialized PTSD units spent a fraction of what the average unit did. Five medical centers — in California, Iowa, Louisiana, Tennessee and Wisconsin — spent about \$100,000 on their PTSD clinical teams, less than one-fifth the national average. The documents also show that while the VA's treatment for PTSD is generally effective, nearly a third of the agency's inpatient and other intensive PTSD units failed to meet at least one of the quality goals monitored by a VA health-research organization. The VA medical center in Lexington, Ky., failed to meet four of six quality goals, according to the internal reports. <More at: www.mcclatchydc.com/227/story/19626.html>

SEE "ADD-ONS" FOR VA'S SELF-EVALUATION RESULTS

POLICY SHIFT CUT DISABILITY RETIREMENTS

Tom Philpott - April 20, 2007

Today's Disability Retirement Squeeze Began Years Ago

Wary of rising disability retirement costs, the Department of Defense under then-secretary Caspar Weinberger quietly sought and received an internal legal opinion that, to this day, tamps down the number of wounded or ill service members awarded military disability retirement.

The March 25, 1985, memo from the DoD office of general counsel, which only recently came to light, gave Defense health officials a green light to restrain military disability ratings without a change in law. They did so by directing the services to stop setting disability awards based on all service-connected ailments found during medical evaluations, and start basing them only on conditions that leave members unfit for duty. <More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,132880,00.html>

PENTAGON MAY BE SHORTING TROOP BENEFITS

Hope Yen - Associated Press - April 24, 2007

WASHINGTON - An injured Soldier's disability should be determined by Veterans Affairs officials - and not the Pentagon - because the Army might be shortchanging troops, a presidential commission was told on Monday. ... Critics say the Army rates its injured Soldiers at a lower level of disability compared with the other armed services and the VA so it can save on the costs of disability payments. <More at: www6.miami.edu/UMH/CDA/UMH_Main/1,1770,39370-1:54741-3,00.html>

FAMILIES CRACKING UNDER WAR PRESSURE

Agence France-Presse - September 06, 2007

U.S. military families have become the unseen victims of the war in Iraq, with those left behind suffering when Soldiers go off to fight and when they finally return home.

"I don't know one military family that is still together or anything like they were before the Soldier in the family went to war," 30-year-old Mylinda, whose husband was among the first Marines to be deployed in Iraq, told AFP.

Mylinda's husband returned home from Iraq around a year ago after "we both decided then that he should leave the military because otherwise he would have had to go back," she said.

"We did pretty well when he first got back, but he never spoke about Iraq. "I could see he was unhappy and he lost self-confidence when he left the military and couldn't find a job," she said.

But then came the bombshell.

"In March, he said he didn't want to be married anymore," Mylinda said.

The majority of Iraq veterans who took part in a recent study acknowledged having "some family problem at least once a week," said Dr Steven Sayers of the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center in Philadelphia.

... "It could be that being depressed, they are too self-critical, and that may complicate the task of being reintegrated into the family," Sayers said, adding that all the veterans sampled for the study had shown signs of depression or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,148297,00.html>

FAMILIES WAGE FIGHT FOR BRAIN-INJURED

By Charles M. Sennott, Globe Staff | September 9, 2007

He never saw the trip wire. US Army Private Vincent Mannion, hunting for insurgents near Tikrit, Iraq, on March 11, had just kicked down a steel gate when a booby trap made of two large mortar shells detonated.

A storm of shrapnel, incinerating heat, and a concussive force brought the cinder-block structure down on top of him and Sergeant Daniel Woodcock, his team leader in the 82d Airborne Division. Woodcock was killed. Mannion, a 19-year-old who grew up in West

Roxbury, sustained deep shrapnel wounds to his arm and torso. He was unconscious, but alive. The more devastating injury was not yet visible.

The blast wave had rumbled through his brain, a sudden shock of high pressure then low that severely damaged his cerebral lobes while leaving his cranium - and the Army helmet meant to protect it - intact. He had suffered the signature wound of the war in Iraq: traumatic brain injury, or TBI, which has been diagnosed in nearly 3,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. But if Mannion's devastating injury is tragically common, his case may prove critical to other wounded veterans across the country.

His family has joined and inspired a budding movement demanding specialized care for severe TBI patients in private facilities outside the military and veterans healthcare system - a system that many families of veterans, and some leading medical specialists, view as badly overtaxed and no match for the nation's best rehabilitative hospitals.

<More at: www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/09/09/families_wage_fight_for_brain_injured/>

VETERANS SHARE FRUSTRATIONS WITH VA, RED TAPE

Gail Schontzler - Chronicle Staff Writer

Travis Kamps served with the Montana National Guard in the Iraq War, where a Humvee accident bounced his face off a steering wheel and knocked out his two front teeth. Now Kamps, 23, is in a new battle - fighting the Veterans Administration bureaucracy. On Friday, holding an ice pack to his infected mouth, he went to the Museum of the Rockies with about 45 other military veterans to ask U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., to fix a frustrating and partly broken VA system.

Kamps, now a Montana State University student, said the VA wouldn't let him get tooth implants from a Bozeman dentist but required that he travel to Salt Lake City. After he returned to Bozeman, an infection that felt as big as a softball sent him to the emergency room, where he needed intravenous antibiotics. But VA red tape to cover the emergency room visit was so bad, he said, "it's almost not worth it." Lost records, delays, understaffed offices, shortages of common medical devices, and a lack of heart doctors were just some of the complaints from local veterans. <More at: <http://bozemandailychronicle.com/articles/2007/09/15/news/>>

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS SEEN AT RISK

Anna Badkhen - Globe Correspondent - September 17, 2007

Mental health workers are looking for new ways to help Native American service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. In some parts of the United States, specialists are combining modern treatments with traditional healing methods, employing medicine men, participating in sweat lodges, and asking tribal elders to encourage veterans to seek professional medical help. But in New England, the effort to reach out to Native American veterans is lagging, <More at: www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/09/17/native_american_veterans_seen_at_risk/>

SUICIDE AMONG OREGON MILITARY VETS A BIG PROBLEM

KATU Web Staff

PORTLAND, Ore. - A new state report shows that suicide - especially among military veterans - continues to be a big problem in Oregon. Suicide is considered a "violent death" for statistical purposes, and of 748 violent deaths in Oregon in 2005, 555 of those involved suicide, keeping it the leading cause of violent death in the state.

The report, compiled by the state's Violent Death Reporting System, showed that suicide rates were higher among military veterans than the general population. Of the 555 suicides, 153 involved veterans. A significant difference was found between the rates of suicide among veterans and non-veterans - especially between the ages of 18 to 24, 35 to 44 and 45 to 54.

<More at: www.kval.com/news/local/9835042.html>

BUT JIM-BOY SAYS EVERYTHING IS GOOD AND GETTING BETTER!

SUICIDE HOTLINE WORKING WELL, VA CHIEF SAYS

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Sep 18, 2007

Outgoing Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson said the VA's new suicide hotline has saved 56 lives in its short history.

More than 4,500 veterans have contacted the 24-hour suicide prevention hotline since the first call was received on July 25, with 346 of the callers referred to a counselor, said Nicholson, who will step down Oct. 1 to return to the private sector.

Of those referred to a counselor, 56 were "rescues," 194 were transferred to community hotlines where they could get immediate help and 165 were admitted to VA hospitals. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2007/09/military_nicholson_va_suicide_070918w/>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

TWO OF SEVEN SOLDIERS WHO WROTE 'NYT' OP-ED DIE IN IRAQ

Greg Mitchell - September 12, 2007

NEW YORK The Op-Ed by seven active duty U.S. soldiers in Iraq questioning the war drew international attention just three weeks ago. Now two of the seven are dead.

Sgt. Omar Mora and Sgt. Yance T. Gray died Monday in a vehicle accident in western Baghdad, two of seven U.S. troops killed in the incident which was reported just as Gen. David Petraeus was about to report to Congress on progress in the "surge." The names have just been released.

<More at: http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/news/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003638726>

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2007

This week, the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps all announced an increase. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 1,560 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 of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 76,601; Navy Reserve, 5,691; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,914; Marine Corps Reserve, 6,608; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 309. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been mobilized to 97,123, including both units and individual augmentees.

A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at www.defenseink.mil/news/Sep2007/d20070919ngr.pdf

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE MONDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,799
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 8/31]	27,767
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 8/31]	≥28,645
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 8/31]	122
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	4
KILLED UK	170
KILLED OTHER COALITION	130
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	1,001
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,419
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 80,116 [LANCET-1,063,825]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+ [LANCET-1,335,776]
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [8/15]	1.9M/2.35M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	441
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 12/2006]	5,862
KILLED COALITION (6/2007)	278
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2006)	1,472
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 [9/24]	\$454,338,684,854

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

TWO ADDITIONAL EXCELLENT BOOKS ON PTSD

[MEAGHER, ILONA. *MOVING A NATION TO CARE*. 1ST PAPERBACK ED. BROOKLYN, NY: IG PUBLISHING, 2007](#)

[CANTRELL, BRIDGET C. & DEAN, CHUCK. *DOWN RANGE* 1ST ED. SEATTLE, WA: WORDSMITH BOOKS, 2005.](#)

DON'T FORGET! EVERYONE IS PITCHING IN TO HELP AND TO SHARE THE SACRIFICE – AREN'T THEY?? ~ SOME STORIES IN THAT REGARD.

PALM SPRINGS TAXI FIRM SAYS FREE MILITARY SHUTTLE HURTS BUSINESS

The Associated Press - :09/12/2007

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif.—Free shuttles for the military between Palm Springs International Airport and Twentynine Palms was a patriotic gesture hatched by a La Quinta resident. But Top's Taxi claims its eight-cab fleet has already lost thousands of dollars to the Soldiers Organized Services shuttles, which estimates 1,200 Marines have been transported since May between the airport at the Marine base.

The average taxi ride from the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center to Palm Springs costs about \$130, while the Palm Springs to Twentynine Palms trip can cost up to \$180. <More at: www.mercurynews.com/breakingnews/ci_6872082>

MANY FEDERAL HIRING MANAGERS SNUBBING VETS

Rick Maze - September 10, 2007

Complaints about the veterans' hiring preferences for federal jobs have prompted a House panel to question if the Office of Personnel Management is up to the job of setting and enforcing the policy. The House Veterans' Affairs subcommittee on economic opportunity, with jurisdiction over veterans' employment programs but not over federal personnel practices, was told that despite renewed emphasis on hiring veterans, many obstacles remain.

... Meg Bartley of the National Veterans Legal Service Program said her group has spent eight years reviewing and investigating veterans' preference violations.

"Our conclusion, based on discussions with individual veterans, review of numerous complaints and participation in litigation concerning alleged veterans' preference violations, is there are many violations of the spirit and the letter of veterans' preference laws."

Bartley identified three practices by some hiring managers that deprive veterans of what she called "even-handed" treatment:

- Canceling job postings to avoid hiring veterans who are the top candidates.
- Issuing complicated job listings — known as certificates — that allow multiple competitions for a single job.
- Filling jobs outside the normal competitive exam process where veterans' preference would apply.

<More at: <http://federaltimes.com/index.php?S=3026827>>

LETTING OUR VETERANS DOWN

Aaron Glantz - Sep 13, 2007

The sorry state of care of American veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan is not accidental. It's on purpose. Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Bush Administration has fought every effort to improve care for wounded and disabled veterans.

"The Department of Defense went to war in Iraq. They hired hundreds of thousands of extra soldiers from the Guard and Reserve to make the military larger so that they could do the invasion of Iraq," noted Paul Sullivan, a veteran of the first Gulf War who was working as a high-ranking civil servant at the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington when America invaded Iraq.

However, the Department of Veterans Affairs, they didn't hire more doctors, and they didn't hire more bureaucrats to help them with their paperwork. Indeed, as the country prepared for war, the Bush administration was actively involved in scaling back veterans' benefits. ... As a result, for example, the number of people charged with reviewing and approving veterans' disability claims has actually dropped since the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. According to the American Federation of Government Employees, the VA employed 1,392 veterans service representatives in June 2007, compared to 1,516 in January 2003.

<More at: http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/20070913_glantz_sep_13_va_story/>

NOTICE

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

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC. **ADVISORY BOARD**

GOVERNOR MICHAEL DUKAKIS (FRMR USA)
EVELYN (PAT) FOOTE, BG USA (RET)
HON. JOHN GARAMENDI (CA LT. GOVERNOR)
D. O. HELMICK , (FRMR CMSNR CHP ~ FRMR CANG)
ART HICKS, CMSGT USAF (RET)-[TUSKEGEE AIRMAN]

JOSEPH P. HOAR, GEN USMC (RET)
HON. P. N. (PETE) MCCLOSKEY, COL USMCR (RET)
HON. WADE SANDERS CAPT USNR (RET) (FRMR DEPUTY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY)
HON. JEROME (JERRY) WALDIE (FRMR USA)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

CHAIR BOB HANDY
VICE CHAIR SANDY COOK
SECRETARY HARLAN HOBGOOD
TREASURER RUSS WEED
AT LARGE JIM COOK
AT LARGE RON DEXTER
AT LARGE GEORGE GIACOPPE

AT LARGE DON KATZ
AT LARGE TOM MULLENS
AT LARGE THOM O'SHAUGHNESSY
AT LARGE RIC SCHROEDER
COMMITTEES
MEMBERSHIP LOUISE GIACOPPE
NEWSLETTER SANDY COOK
WEBMASTER MARTY U'REN

Fair Use Notice

This newsletter may contain copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of active-duty military and veterans' issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Are you forwarding this newsletter to others? Please let us know.

Want to join us? Please apply for membership at www.vuft.org It's FREE!

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 ~ PTSD OUTCOMES

A research unit of the VA tracks how effective the inpatient or other "intensive" treatment programs are in reducing PTSD symptoms, alcohol and drug abuse, levels of violence, and work habits. After analyzing the outcomes for each measure, and adjusting to take into account the different patients seen at each medical center, it ranked the programs, with those at the top of the list having the best outcomes and those at bottom the worst. Here is the ranking for care delivered in fiscal year 2006:

Veterans Affairs Medical Center	Outcomes ranking
Coatesville, Pa.	1
Montrose, N.Y.	2
Martinsburg, W.Va.	3
Salisbury, N.C.	4
Seattle, Wash.	5
Tucson, Ariz.	6 (tie)
Hot Springs, S.D.	6 (tie)
Waco, Texas	8
Salem, Va.	9
Des Moines, Iowa	10
Topeka, Kan.	11 (tie)
Roseburg, Ore.	11 (tie)
Bay Pines, Fla.	14 (tie)
Tomah, Wis.	14 (tie)
Hilo, Hawaii	14 (tie)
Dayton, Ohio	16
Newington, Conn.	17
Palo Alto, Calif.	18
Boise, Idaho	19
White River Junction, Vt.	20 (tie)
Cleveland, Ohio	20 (tie)
Northampton, (Leeds, Mass.)	22 (tie)
Togus, Maine	22 (tie)
Milwaukee, Wis.	24
Buffalo, NY	25
Jackson, Miss.	26
Nashville, Tenn.	27
Miami, Fla.	28 (tie)
Tacoma, Wash.	28 (tie)
North Chicago, Ill.	30
Denver, Colo.	31
Cincinnati, Ohio	32
North Little Rock, Ark.	33
Memphis, Tenn.	34
Battle Creek, Mich.	35
Lexington, Ky.	36

Source: "The Long Journey Home: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in the Department of Veterans Affairs," for fiscal year 2006; the report is produced by the VA's Northeast Program Evaluation Center