

# SOUND OFF!



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THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

*“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”*

25 SEPTEMBER 2009

## FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

### WHY WE FOUGHT

From 1942 to 1945, during the depths of World War II, Frank Capra made the propaganda series **“Why We Fight”** at the behest of the US Government. These seven films were designed to explain to fighting men and women and to the general American public why we were in the war.

The films were good examples of how propaganda can be used for the national good – it is not always a negative thing – even though by today’s standards they would be considered racist toward the Japanese.

Each film included, as its closing scene, General Marshall describing what defined victory – “the utter defeat of the German and Japanese war machines.”

There was no comparable effort on the part of the government to formulate the reasons for our fights in Korea, Vietnam, The Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan. There certainly was, however, plenty of propaganda.

The difference, of course, was that whereas FDR tried to explain to us clearly what we were fighting for and what would constitute a win, since then we have been given little but slogans and there has never been a definition of a win.

Those slogans ranged from “Asia will fall like dominoes” to “Global War on Terror”. Slogans make great bumper stickers but do not provide explanations.

The goals, to the extent that any were stated, ranged from “Defeating Communism” to “Spreading Democracy” to “Defeating Terror” – broad and nearly meaningless statements with no elements of proof that could tell us when we were done with a specific war.

The Iraq war’s goals went from “destroying WMDs” to “regime change” to “stand up the Iraqi security forces and give the Iraq government room to breathe” to “create a secure and stable Iraq”.

The Afghanistan war’s goals have gone from “the destruction of terrorist training camps and infrastructure within Afghanistan, the capture of al-Qaeda leaders, and the cessation of terrorist activities in Afghanistan”, to “stabilizing and reconstructing Afghanistan.”

In the end there doesn’t seem to be a clear definition of the mission, and there certainly is no definition of the objective that anyone can understand, deal with, or hope to accomplish. Maybe it’s like Justice Potter Stewart’s definition of pornography – “I know it when I see it.” – but I doubt it.

I guess that it’s great to have others tell us why we fight, but the real answer has to come from each of us.

Why did WE fight? By WE I don’t mean the whole nation, and certainly not the government at the time; I mean YOU and ME. How does our WHY compare to today’s WHY?

I can only speak for myself.

First why did we join, and is it different from the motives of those joining today?

I joined because I was not sure what I wanted to do with my life. If I didn’t join I would be drafted anyway, so by joining I had a choice of how I would do my service. Yes, there was an underlying patriotism, and a quest for adventure, but those weren’t the primary motives.

The pay in 1953 wasn’t a big incentive. As an E-2 over four months I made \$72 a month, which in today’s dollars would be \$580; that’s about a third of what today’s E-2 makes (and we pulled our own KP). But the GI Bill was a huge incentive: I just couldn’t afford college nor could my parents afford to send me

(I had watched them struggle to send me through two years and knew that they couldn't keep that up).

Not too much different from the economic and personal motives of those who join today, was it?

Why did we stay in?

There was always the excitement of being a part of something rather big. The longer you stayed and the more assignments you had in different places, the more involved you became and the more engaged you felt. You started to compare your life with the lives of those whom you left behind, and your life always seemed a little more exciting.

Now that part is different today. I don't know what I would have done if I had to serve in the same miserable conditions over and over with nothing to look forward to but going back again. Having worked in the Middle East I know how debilitating the weather, the social conditions and the other constraints there can be.

Of course, during the Vietnam War regulars did go back over and over, but at least we had 18 months to two years between tours – no stop loss – and no tour beyond 12 months (13 months for Marines). We had a much larger force then, and despite the half million plus assigned there in 1968, there were more on active duty to pull the tours. We called up almost no Reserves or National Guard (except for the thousands of missions flown by the Air Guard), so we didn't have to lie to them about not going to war.

So in general, if we were there we understood what got us there – we were regulars or were drafted – we hadn't signed up for one kind of duty (Reserve or Guard) and then been forced into doing something else with our lives. We can't say that today's soldiers have the same "luxury", except that they can say that it was their decision alone that placed them in jeopardy of others' policy decisions.

And finally, why did we fight?

We saw, or were convinced by propaganda, that our war (in my case Vietnam) was a significant part of a greater threat (the domino theory of communist takeover of Asia and the world). This doesn't seem much different than the propaganda that convinces many that we are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the greater threat presented by the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

We also fought out of duty. For those of us who were regulars we had taken the king's pence and had to fight the king's battles. Even draftees knew they were

part of a citizen's army and most of them had a fine sense of duty as well. In this regard we were not exactly like today's soldiers, whose sense of duty I am sure is just as keen, although they have to know that today there is no citizen's army..

Ultimately, in the real fight we fought for our buddies, and that is what all soldiers in all wars know to be the truth at all times.

The huge difference between what we fought for and what our fathers, uncles and older brothers fought for is that they were given the "good" propaganda – the truth hyped up a bit to make it more exciting, but in general the truth. Their war made sense no matter how you explained it, and it was explained.

We fought against a threat that didn't really exist in the broader sense, although we didn't sense it at the time. In that regard we are exactly like today's soldiers.

If there is a threat it is not one that can be eliminated by a military solution – Vietnam – Iraq – Afghanistan – all the same. Such a threat could only be sold by bad propaganda – the kind of story that raises up the boogie man that is needed to sell the war – always a long way from the truth.

Nothing takes away from the individual's service to his country. The honorable citizen who serves honorably, deserves the gratitude of the nation. Such service is never "in vain". But – and it's a big but – we have to trust the nation not to send us unless it is essential to the safety of our nation and its true allies.

All citizens have a right to the truth. Especially those who would lay their lives on the line have a right to demand that their government never lie to them about the essentiality of their sacrifice.

Maybe that is more than we are allowed to expect from any government, and if that is so, shame on us for accepting it over and over again.

Our fighting men and women always deserve the absolute and unvarnished truth. To do less shames the nation and its leaders and disrespects the service and the intelligence of its military and veterans.

**“The nation that will insist on drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking done by cowards.”**

Sir William Francis Butler

So I guess, with a few exceptions, we fought then for the same reasons young men and women

are fighting today. As the saying goes, "The more things change the more they stay the same".

We should all remember that. Today's new veterans should remember that we who went before made the same kinds of choices they did, and were inspired by the same feelings. Older veterans should remember that these new veterans

are in just as real a war as we were, it is only the mission and objectives that are unclear.

There was a time when our government respected us enough as citizens and intelligent ones at that, to tell us why we fought. It's past time for them to start doing that again or take today's soldiers out of the fight. [Ed.]

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

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

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

### **VA WARNS VETERANS OF TELEPHONE PRESCRIPTION SCAM**

September 17, 2009

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is warning Veterans not to give credit card numbers over the phone to callers claiming to update VA prescription information.

"America's Veterans have become targets in an inexcusable scam that dishonors their service and misrepresents the Department built for them," said Dr. Gerald Cross, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "VA simply does not call Veterans and ask them to disclose personal financial information over the phone."

Veteran Service Organizations have brought to VA's attention that callers are misrepresenting the VA to gain personal information over the phone. They say VA recently changed procedures for dispensing prescriptions and ask for the Veteran's credit card number.

"VA has not changed its processes for dispensing prescription medicines," Cross said. "Nor has VA changed its long-standing commitment to protect the personal information of this nation's Veterans."

### **MEMORIAL CALLS FOR PHOTOS OF VIETNAM VETS**

Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs - 09.15.2009

WASHINGTON - The National Call for Photos, a campaign to gather images of the more than 58,000 men and women whose names are on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, will be launched Sept. 17 at a Newseum event here hosted by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and FedEx Office. FedEx Office will use its locations across the country to help in gathering photos.

<More at: [http://www.dvidshub.net/?script=news/news\\_show.php&id=38783](http://www.dvidshub.net/?script=news/news_show.php&id=38783)>

### **DOD ESTABLISHES A PHYSICAL DISABILITY BOARD OF REVIEW (PDBR) WITH THE AIR FORCE AS LEAD SERVICE.**

The purpose of the PDBR is to reassess the accuracy and fairness of the combined disability ratings assigned Service members who were discharged as unfit for continued military service by the Military Departments with a combined disability rating of 20 percent or less and were not found to be eligible for retirement.

Any Service member may have his or her case reviewed by the Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) if that individual (hereafter referred to as a "covered individual"):

- a. Was separated from the Armed Forces during the period beginning on September 11, 2001, and ending on December 31, 2009, due to unfitness for continued military service resulting from a physical disability under chapter 61 of Reference (b); and
- b. Received from DoD a combined disability rating of 20 percent or less; and
- c. Was not found to be eligible for retirement.

The DoD Instruction DoDI 6040.44 is available at: <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/604044p.pdf>

DD Form 294 - APPLICATION FOR A REVIEW BY THE PHYSICAL DISABILITY BOARD OF REVIEW (PDBR) OF THE RATING AWARDED ACCOMPANYING A MEDICAL SEPARATION FROM THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES is available at: <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/infomgt/forms/eforms/dd0294.pdf>

## ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

### VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: On 12 August we appeared before the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. An article from the LA Times on 24 August summarizes the results so far < [latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24.0.1423297.story](http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24.0.1423297.story)>

#### .Case Progress to Date:

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

9/25/2007 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

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

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

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

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

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

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

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants' Reply Brief filed

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

8/12/09 Oral arguments

9/14/09 Reply on mediation [changed date]

9/14/09 No agreement on mediation. 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit accepts the case.

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

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

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

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

At the Cincinnati, Ohio Main Post Office located at 1591 Dalton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45234, two D.A.V.'s have been removed from service for being disabled and I myself, a clerk of 21 years, have been told that I will be put out very soon also for being handicapped. That's correct. The USPS here claims that they no longer have work for us because of work handicaps / medical restrictions. They are discriminating against us D.A.V.'s. I hope that you can report this on your web site in order to put public pressure on them to do the right and legal thing.

Tony S. Long, Clerk, USPS

## RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

### LEGISLATION COULD EXTEND GI BILL TO MORE GUARDSMEN

Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs - Jameel S. Moses - 09.16.2009

ARLINGTON, Va., - More than 30,000 additional National Guard members may become eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill with the help of bipartisan legislation introduced, Sept. 10. U.S. Rep. Dave Loebsack of Iowa has introduced a bill that proposes a change to the GI Bill eligibility rules to include National Guard members called to active duty in support of homeland security.

"Essentially, the new GI Bill of Rights that we passed last year unintentionally left out about 30,000 members of the National Guard," Loebsack said on Radio Iowa. "They are not receiving all of the benefits they have earned."

<More at: [www.dvidshub.net/?script=news/news\\_show.php&id=38844](http://www.dvidshub.net/?script=news/news_show.php&id=38844)>

## **HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HOLDS ROUNDTABLE ON VETERANS' TREATMENT COURTS**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE September 17, 2009

Washington, D.C. – On Wednesday, September 16, 2009, Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) led a roundtable discussion on judicial courts that only hear cases involving veterans and provide judges greater latitude in sentencing for non-violent crimes. Modeled after drug and mental health treatment courts, judges are able to order counseling, substance abuse treatment, mentoring, job training, housing assistance, and job placement services as alternatives to incarceration. With both Democratic and Republican Members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee in attendance, participants discussed their efforts to help veterans avoid jail by connecting them to necessary treatment and support. <More at: : [www.vawatchdog.org/09/hcva09/hcva091709-1.htm](http://www.vawatchdog.org/09/hcva09/hcva091709-1.htm)>

## **AKAKA & TESTER CALL FOR DELIBERATE ACTION TO FIX VA'S VETERANS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION SYSTEM**

September 17, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, heard testimony on the state of VA's system for disability compensation.

Witnesses from VA, veterans service organizations and the larger disability policy community urged cautious movement toward fixing what many acknowledge is a broken system.

Senator Akaka stated: *"To bring the right changes to a process this complicated and important, we must be deliberative, focused, and open to input from all who are affected. At the same time, we cannot be paralyzed by complexity; the current system is already outdated, and it will get worse until we act."* <More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/09/scva09/scva091709-1.htm>>

## **ONE STATE GIVETH AND ANOTHER STATE TAKETH AWAY**

### **KENTUCKY EXEMPTS SOLDIERS FROM STATE INCOME TAX**

Dave Campbell Sep 14, 2009

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. (Army News Service, Sept. 14, 2009) -- Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear signed the state's military tax exemption bill Sept. 9 in a ceremony at the 101st Airborne Division Headquarters.

The bill will relieve Soldiers of their yearly income tax responsibilities if they are residents of Kentucky.

Kentucky became the 11th state in which Soldiers are not required to pay state income tax, joining Florida, Alaska, Michigan, Texas, Oregon, New Hampshire, Nevada, South Dakota, Wyoming and Washington state.

<More at: [www.army.mil/news/2009/09/14/27341-kentucky-exempts-soldiers-from-state-income-tax/](http://www.army.mil/news/2009/09/14/27341-kentucky-exempts-soldiers-from-state-income-tax/)>

### **MICHIGAN CUTS 25 PERCENT FROM VETERANS' SERVICE GROUPS**

Kathryn Lynch-Morin - The Bay City Times - September 24, 2009

Michigan veterans may soon face a difficult time filing for disability and pension benefits.

A legislative conference committee voted Tuesday to cut \$1 million, or 25 percent, of funding for veterans' service organizations, such as the American Legion and Disabled American Veterans, in the state budget that begins Oct. 1.

The groups, which help veterans file claims and navigate through seas of paperwork, examinations and appeals, already faced a \$1 million cut in the fiscal year that ends next week.

<More at: [www.mlive.com/news/bay-city/index.ssf/2009/09/state\\_cuts\\_25\\_percent\\_from\\_vet.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/bay-city/index.ssf/2009/09/state_cuts_25_percent_from_vet.html)>

## **RETREAT – NEWS**

### **AL-QAIDA INTERNET THREAT LEADS TO TRAVEL ALERT FOR GERMANY**

John Vandiver - Stars and Stripes European edition - September 25, 2009

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. State Department is urging Americans to exercise caution during their travels around Germany in the coming weeks following a series of threatening messages by al-Qaida.

The travel alert, which advises U.S. citizens to keep a low profile, will remain in effect two weeks after Germany's federal elections on Sunday.

Americans are advised to monitor news reports and consider the level of security present when visiting public places or choosing hotels, restaurants, and entertainment and recreation venues. <More at: [www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=65002](http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=65002)>

## **'I'M ALIVE' US SOLDIER JESSE JASPER TELLS FAMILY, AFTER THEY WERE TOLD HE WAS KILLED**

David Byers - September 16, 2009

A US Army unit promised tonight to review how it delivers information to families after a couple were wrongly told that their son had been killed in combat in Afghanistan.

Ray Jasper and his wife, Robin, had started assembling family members to inform them of the death of Sergeant Jesse Jasper, 26, after receiving a call from a liaison officer.

However, after reading a Facebook condolence group, Sergeant Jasper's horrified girlfriend telephoned his father to inform him that his son was alive.

Sergeant Jasper himself phoned shortly afterwards to confirm the news, asking his father from Afghanistan: "Dad, what's going on?"

"I said, 'Oh my God you're alive, I love you, I love you, I love you, you're alive,'" Mr Jasper, 49, said.

<More at: [www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6837433.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/Afghanistan/article6837433.ece)>

## **PROSECUTORS IN IRAQ CASE SEE PATTERN BY GUARDS**

James Risen - September 14, 2009

WASHINGTON — Private security guards who worked for Blackwater repeatedly shot wildly into the streets of Baghdad without regard for civilians long before they were involved in a 2007 shooting episode that left at least 14 Iraqis dead, federal prosecutors charge in a new court document.

While traveling through Baghdad in heavily armored vehicles, at least one of the guards, under contract with the State Department to provide security for United States Embassy personnel, fired an automatic weapon "without aiming" while another deliberately fired into the streets to "instigate gun battles in a manner that was inconsistent with the use of force and escalation of force policies that governed all Blackwater personnel in Iraq," the federal prosecutors stated.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/2009/09/14/world/middleeast/14contractors.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/14/world/middleeast/14contractors.html)>

## **U.S. MILITARY CLOSES HUGE PRISON IN SOUTHERN IRAQ**

Hannah Allam - McClatchy Newspapers - Sep. 16, 2009

BAGHDAD — The U.S. military on Wednesday announced the closing of the sprawling Camp Bucca prison in southern Iraq, transferring \$50 million in infrastructure and custody of all but 180 of the site's detainees to the Iraqi government.

Early this year, the U.S. military began emptying the prison, releasing 5,600 detainees and transferring another 1,400 with arrest warrants or detention orders to Iraqi authorities, according to the U.S. military's Task Force 134, which oversees American-run prisons in Iraq.

Once the remaining 180 prisoners, considered dangerous "high-risk detainees," are moved to U.S.-run detention centers in and around Baghdad, Bucca officially will be closed. The transfer was expected late Wednesday or early Thursday.

<More at: [www.mcclatchydc.com/homepage/v-print/story/75554.html](http://www.mcclatchydc.com/homepage/v-print/story/75554.html)>

## **U.S. TO EXPAND DETAINEE REVIEW IN AFGHAN PRISON**

Eric Schmitt - September 13, 2009

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration soon plans to issue new guidelines aimed at giving the hundreds of prisoners at an American detention center in Afghanistan significantly more ability to challenge their custody, Pentagon officials and detainee advocates say.

The new Pentagon guidelines would assign a United States military official to each of the roughly 600 detainees at the American-run prison at the Bagram Air Base north of Kabul. These officials would not be lawyers but could for the first time gather witnesses and evidence, including classified material, on behalf of the detainees to challenge their detention in proceedings before a military-appointed review board.

Some of the detainees have already been held at Bagram for as long as six years. And unlike the prisoners at the Guantánamo Bay naval base in Cuba, these detainees have had no access to lawyers, no right to hear the allegations against them and only rudimentary reviews of their status as "enemy combatants," military officials said.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/2009/09/13/world/asia/13detain.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/13/world/asia/13detain.html)>

## **U.S. SAYS SEEKING 60-DAY DELAY IN GUANTANAMO TRIALS**

James Vicini and Jeremy Pelofsky – Reuters - September 16, 2009

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Obama administration said on Wednesday it would seek a two-month delay for all military trials for terrorism suspects held at Guantanamo Bay while Congress weighs new rules for the proceedings and the White House considers trying them in U.S. courts.

President Barack Obama is trying to close the prison, with plans to try some of the foreign terrorism suspects in military commissions and others in federal courts in the United States. The prison at a U.S. naval base in Cuba currently holds 226 detainees. <More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/16/AR2009091601996\\_of.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/16/AR2009091601996_of.html)>

## **ARMY TARGETS TOUR LENGTHS, TOP NCO SAYS**

September 23, 2009

FORT JACKSON, S.C. -- As the Army's senior enlisted Soldier, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth Preston said, questions about long deployments dominate his conversations with Soldiers.

"That, by far, has been the biggest question for several years," Preston said. He hopes the answer is more troops.

... During his speech to several hundred officers and enlisted troops, Preston explained that the Army is trying to extend the amount of time Soldiers are home between combat deployments.

The Army has increased its total number of Soldiers during the past three years. And, it's growing again with plans to add 10,000 troops by 2010, Preston said. The growth will help increase the time between deployments.

And, it will allow the Army to remove its stop-loss policy, which allows it to keep Soldiers beyond the date when their enlistment commitment is met. Currently, Soldiers deploy for 15 months and then have a 12-month break before their unit goes overseas again. <More at: [www.military.com/news/article/army-targets-tour-lengths-top-nco-says.html](http://www.military.com/news/article/army-targets-tour-lengths-top-nco-says.html)>

## **MARINE OFFICER WHO SET UP GUANTANAMO PRISON DISMAYED BY WHAT IT HAS BECOME**

Tony Perry - September 24, 2009

In late 2001, when the Pentagon decided to put detainees at the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the task of setting up a camp and establishing its rules went to Marine Brig. Gen. Michael Lehnert.

Lehnert planned to rely on what he learned while running a camp at Guantanamo in the mid-1990s for nearly 19,000 Cubans and Haitians trying to flee to the United States.

And he was determined to follow the spirit, if not the letter, of the Geneva Convention, providing decent food, banning extreme interrogation and allowing religious services. He brought in a Muslim chaplain and permitted visits by the Red Cross.

When detainees went on a hunger strike, he spoke to them, even allowing one to get a phone message from his wife in Afghanistan.

But in the bureaucratic jostling that followed, Lehnert's approach was supplanted by that of a hard-nosed Army general. <More at: [latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-marine-gitmo25-2009sep25.0.1946707\\_story](http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-marine-gitmo25-2009sep25.0.1946707_story)>

## **DESPITE SLUMP, U.S. ROLE AS TOP ARMS SUPPLIER GROWS**

Thom Shanker - September 7, 2009

WASHINGTON — Despite a recession that knocked down global arms sales last year, the United States expanded its role as the world's leading weapons supplier, increasing its share to more than two-thirds of all foreign armaments deals, according to a new Congressional study.

The United States signed weapons agreements valued at \$37.8 billion in 2008, or 68.4 percent of all business in the global arms bazaar, up significantly from American sales of \$25.4 billion the year before.

Italy was a distant second, with \$3.7 billion in worldwide weapons sales in 2008, while Russia was third with \$3.5 billion in arms sales last year — down considerably from the \$10.8 billion in weapons deals signed by Moscow in 2007.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/2009/09/07/world/07weapons.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/07/world/07weapons.html)>

## **OBAMA TIGHTENS STATE SECRETS STANDARD**

Carrie Johnson-The Washington Post - 23 September 2009

*New policy may affect wiretap, torture suits.*

The Obama administration on Wednesday announced a new policy making it much more difficult for the government to claim that it is protecting state secrets when it hides details of sensitive national security strategies such as rendition and warrantless eavesdropping. <More at: [www.truthout.org/092309R](http://www.truthout.org/092309R)>

## **ONLY FIVE YEARS AFTER THE IG REPORTED ON IT!!**

### **CIA EXPERIMENTS ON US SOLDIERS LINKED TO TORTURE PROGRAM**

Jeffrey Kaye - truthout Report - 13 September 2009

A number of new reports have, in recent weeks, highlighted evidence of illegal human experimentation on US-held "terrorism" prisoners undergoing torture. Those reports come on the heels of a "white paper" by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), "Aiding Torture: Health Professionals' Ethics and Human Rights Violations Demonstrated", in the May 2004 inspector general's report. <More at: [www.truthout.org/091309R](http://www.truthout.org/091309R)>

### **RETIRED 4-STARS REPUDIATE CHENEY ON TORTURE**

Charles C. Krulak and Joseph P. Hoar – Miami Herald - Sep. 11, 2009

**Fear was no excuse to condone torture**

In the fear that followed the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Americans were told that defeating Al Qaeda would require us to "take off the gloves." As a former commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps and a retired commander-in-chief of U.S. Central Command, we knew that was a recipe for disaster.

But we never imagined that we would feel duty-bound to publicly denounce a vice president of the United States, a man who has served our country for many years. In light of the irresponsible statements recently made by former Vice President Dick Cheney, however, we feel we must repudiate his dangerous ideas -- and his scare tactics.

We have seen how ill-conceived policies that ignored military law on the treatment of enemy prisoners hindered our ability to defeat al Qaeda. We have seen American troops die at the hands of foreign fighters recruited with stories about tortured Muslim detainees at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib. And yet Cheney and others who orchestrated America's disastrous trip to "the dark side" continue to assert -- against all evidence -- that torture "worked" and that our country is better off for having gone there.

*Charles C. Krulak was commandant of the Marine Corps from 1995 to 1999. Joseph P. Hoar was commander in chief of U.S. Central Command from 1991 to 1994* <More at: [www.miamiherald.com/opinion/other-views/story/1227832.html](http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/other-views/story/1227832.html)>

## **THIS ONE WILL JUST THRILL YOU!!**

### **CONGRESS CHALLENGES BONUSES AT VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Kimberly Hefling - Associated Press Writer – Sep 23, 2009

WASHINGTON – Lawmakers on Wednesday questioned whether millions of dollars in bonuses were appropriately awarded to employees at the Veterans Affairs Department.

The agency's inspector general recently found that over a two-year period, \$24 million in bonuses were awarded to technology office employees at the VA, some under questionable circumstances. It also detailed abuses ranging from nepotism to an inappropriate relationship between two VA employees.

In a separate issue involving bonuses at the agency reviewed by the Veterans' Affairs House oversight subcommittee, executives within all department were awarded \$4.3 million in performance bonuses in the last fiscal year — some more than \$60,000, said Rep. Harry Mitchell, D-Ariz., who chaired a subcommittee hearing on the issue.

<More at: [http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/politics/2009927465\\_apusveteransbonuses.html](http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/politics/2009927465_apusveteransbonuses.html)>

## **TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
9/23-9/25		Fresno, CA	Stand Down	<a href="#">Charles Hunnicutt</a>	559-454-5436
9/24-9/27		Aviation Heritage Park Bowling Green, Kentucky	The Wall that Heals	Aviation Heritage Park, Inc.	

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9/24		Panama City, FL	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Louie Davis</a>	850-615-0091
9/24		Great Falls, MT	Resource Fair	Rodger McConnell	406-727-3939
9/24		Bemidji, MN	Resource Fair	Paul Pedersen	218-722-8763
9/25		Alexandria, LA	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Rena D. Powell, LCSW</a>	318-473-0010 x-2773
9/25		Cherry Hill, NJ	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Patty Richter/Kimberly Wallace</a>	609-530-6949
10/2		Ferndale CA	Stand Down	<a href="#">Jennifer Fusaro</a>	707-826-6272
10/3		Kalispell MT	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Allen W. Eriksson, Sr.</a>	406-756-7304
10/3		Decatur GA	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Jenifer Turner-Reid</a>	404-321-6111 x-6335
10/8-10/11		Gettysburg College Gettysburg, Pennsylvania	The Wall that Heals	Gettysburg College	
10/9		Kalamazoo MI	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Jacklyn Skinner and Don Jarzambek</a>	269-679-5764
10/9		St. Louis MO	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Larry Helm</a>	314-615-4038

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## **TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES**

### **COLA UPDATE**

For the first time since 1975 when Congress made the Social Security cost-of-living-allowance (COLA) automatic, beneficiaries are not going to get an increase. ... COLAs are based on inflation and, according to officials, inflation did not increase in 2009. ... Several bills have been introduced in Congress to try and "fix" the no-COLA projection for 2010.

<More at: [www.ansa.org/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ansa.org/Pages/default.aspx)>

### **GROUPS WANT REVIEW AFTER VETS LOSE VISION**

Juliana Barbassa - Associated Press Writer - September 23, 2009

A Veterans Administration probe that found eight veterans suffered potentially preventable vision loss while under the care of optometrists at a Northern California VA facility is prompting medical groups to call for a state investigation.

The groups sent a petition Wednesday to the California Department of Consumer Affairs seeking an evaluation of the care received by the veterans at VA Palo Alto. The patients had glaucoma, a class of eye diseases that can lead to blindness.

The California Medical Association, California Academy of Eye Physicians & Surgeons and American Glaucoma Society want the state to suspend a new state law set to take effect in January that would expand optometrists' ability to care for glaucoma patients.

It's the latest salvo in an ongoing dispute between optometrists, who have four years of training, and ophthalmologists, who are medical doctors, over who should be allowed to treat the disease. <More at: [www.miamiherald.com/news/nation/AP/story/1248207.html](http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation/AP/story/1248207.html)>

### **INDEPENDENT REPORT DOCUMENTS PAST ABUSE AND NEGLECT AT PHILADELPHIA VETERANS ADMINISTRATION NURSING HOME**

21 September 2009

Yesterday, Congressman Joe Sestak issued the following statement in response to a recently released report by the Long Term Care Institute, which found that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) nursing home in Philadelphia failed to provide a sanitary and safe environment for their residents, and placed Veterans at serious risk of harm.

"As a Navy Veteran of 31 years, and the son of a WWII Veteran, I believe we have no greater duty than to serve our nation's Veterans with the same respect and dignity with which those brave men and women served us. In recent months, I have grown increasingly troubled by reports-past and present-that give rise to concern of a lingering lack of consistent care and accountability within the VA. Just last week, it was reported that researchers at the VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Philadelphia broke federal law by drawing blood samples from Veterans for a research project without their knowledge.

<More at: [www.veteranstoday.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8635](http://www.veteranstoday.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=8635)>

## **VA HOSPITAL IGNORED VET'S STROKE**

The Virginian-Pilot - September 19, 2009

The inspector general of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has found the Hampton VA Medical Center at fault after a doctor there failed to diagnose a Chesapeake veteran's stroke, leaving him permanently disabled. The investigation also found that the vet's medical record contained lab results from another patient and that the medical center staff turned a deaf ear to his repeated complaints in the weeks afterward. <More at: [www.military.com/news/article/va-hospital-ignored-vet-stroke.html](http://www.military.com/news/article/va-hospital-ignored-vet-stroke.html)>

## **CONGRESS MANDATED THIS STUDY IN 1984**

## **SECRETARY SHINSEKI ANNOUNCES NEW EFFORTS TO EXPLORE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF SERVICE IN VIETNAM**

September 14, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today plans to begin additional research by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to better understand the health consequences of service in Vietnam.

"The National Vietnam Veterans Longitudinal Study (NVVLS) will allow VA to pursue another valuable research tool," Secretary Shinseki said. "The insight we gain from this study will help give us an understanding of how to better serve America's Veterans." <More at: [www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1766](http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1766)>

## **MILITARY SAYS MENTAL WOUNDS OF WAR RUN DEEP**

Kimberly Hefling - (AP) – 9/16/09

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, expressed frustration Wednesday with the pace of government work to heal the mental wounds of war. Recalling a meeting last year with a group of homeless veterans from the recent wars, Mullen said he worries about the rise of a new generation of transients like some who returned from the Vietnam War.

"Shame on us if we don't figure it out this time around to make sure that doesn't happen," Mullen said at a defense forum on the nonphysical injuries of war in Alexandria, Va., just outside of Washington.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/aponline/2009/09/16/us/AP-US-Military-Mental-Health.html](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2009/09/16/us/AP-US-Military-Mental-Health.html)>

## **NOT JUST OUR TROOPS**

## **NUMBER OF TRAUMATIZED GERMAN SOLDIERS SOARS**

Deutsche Welle - 24.09.2009

Cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have been soaring among German soldiers stationed in Afghanistan, according to media reports.

The German daily newspaper Rhein-Zeitung reported on Thursday that the number of soldiers diagnosed for the first time with the mental disorder rose by 35 percent to 163 cases in the first half of 2009. Last year German authorities registered a total of 245 cases, with 226 of these originating in Afghanistan. At the same time the German army, the Bundeswehr, does not have enough psychiatrists to treat the afflicted soldiers, according to the German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung. The paper reported on Thursday that there was only one psychiatrist for the 4,500 German soldiers stationed in Afghanistan. <More at: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4719392,00.html>>

## **AND NOT JUST THIS WAR**

## **TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES DURING WORLD WAR II MAY BE SOURCE OF DEMENTIA FOR VETERANS: STUDY**

Rosemary Black - Daily News Staff Writer - September 16th 2009

World War II veterans could be at risk for dementia because of their traumatic experiences, according to new research. The study, presented in York, England and reported in the London Daily Mail, suggests that traumatic stress may trigger Alzheimer's and other health conditions.

The stress of the war may have caused the dementia affecting hundreds of thousands of Brits, claims Dr. Karen Ritchie from France's National Institute of Health and Medical Research. <More at: [www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/health/2009/09/16/2009-09-16-traumatic-experiences-during-world-war-ii-may-be-source-of-dementia-for-veterans.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/health/2009/09/16/2009-09-16-traumatic-experiences-during-world-war-ii-may-be-source-of-dementia-for-veterans.html)>

## THE VA IS JUST FINDING THIS OUT??

### TOO MANY VETERANS' DISABILITY CLAIMS TAKE TOO LONG TO PROCESS, AUDIT FINDS

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - September 24, 2009

Too many veterans' disability claims take more than a year to process, the Veterans Affairs Department's inspector general said. An audit showed that a year ago, 11,000 veterans had claims pending more than a year. It said the agency awarded retroactive payments totaling about \$43 million for about a third of them. Of that total, it says about \$14 million was unnecessarily delayed. Among the worst cases, the inspector general said, was one involving a veteran who was owed nearly \$65,000 for a delayed claim, and another in which a veteran waited more than two years for payment, the inspector general said. [www.nytimes.com/svc/timespeople/bell.html](http://www.nytimes.com/svc/timespeople/bell.html)

## THESE GUYS COULD NOT MANAGE A TWO-CAR FUNERAL PROCESSION

### VETERANS' PROMISED TUITION CHECKS AWOL

Audrey Hudson - September 25, 2009

Tens of thousands stuck in backlog of GI Bill claims

The U.S. government failed to send promised college tuition checks to tens of thousands of veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars before they returned to school this fall, even after being warned that it was inadequately staffed for the job. The Veterans Affairs Department blamed a backlog of claims filed for GI Bill education benefits that has left veterans who counted on the money for tuition and books scrambling to make ends meet.

Veterans like American University student John Kamin, who received a letter Wednesday from the Army. He was hoping it contained news that his overdue GI Bill college tuition money would soon arrive. Instead, the Iraq war veteran was informed that he may be called back into active duty. <More at: [www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/sep/25/veterans-promised-tuition-checks-awol/](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/sep/25/veterans-promised-tuition-checks-awol/)

## TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2009

### OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,367 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,346
WOUNDED US [9/5/09]	31,494
OTHER US CASUALTIES [9/5/09]	≥38,593
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [8/1/09]	191
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [9/25/09]	≥ 101,650 – 1,339,771
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [11/9/08]	≥ 400K – 1.374M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

### OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,896 DAYS)

KILLED US	848
WOUNDED US [9/5/09]	3,896
OTHER CASUALTIES US [9/5/09]	8,535
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [8/1/09]	33
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED COALITION	567
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION [12/2/07]	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS [7/4/2009]	≥ 7,589
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS [2/24/2009]	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$685,694,187,219
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$227,645,293,838

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

## NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF SEPTEMBER 22, 2009

This week the Coast Guard announced an increase in activated reservists, while the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps announced a decrease. The net collective result is 947 fewer reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 110,016; Navy Reserve, 6,415; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 16,003; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,643; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 651. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 141,728, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2009/d20090922ngr.pdf>.

### **AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF**

#### **FIRST MILITARY HOLIDAY MAILINGS DEADLINE IN NOVEMBER**

The holidays are still months away, but the first deadline for sending holiday cards, letter and packages to service members overseas is approaching.

Friday, Nov. 13, is the deadline for sending holiday packages to troops stationed overseas using Parcel Post to all Air/Army Post Office (APO) or Fleet Post Office (FPO) ZIP Codes.

"The U.S. Postal Service is encouraging the use of these early deadlines to make sure that packages reach their destinations in time for the holidays," St. Louis Postmaster Robert Cavinder.

The Postal Service places APO/FPO mail on special charter flights, commercial airlines and military service aircraft to reach armed services members overseas as quickly as possible.

All military mail, regardless of destination, is sent by domestic mail rate. International rates do not apply to military mail delivery.

All packages and mail must be addressed to individual service members.

#### **FAMILY HEALTH PREMIUMS HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED IN PAST DECADE, SURVEY FINDS**

Philanthropy News Digest - September 18, 2009

Premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance rose to \$13,375 for family coverage this year — a year-over-year increase of 5 percent — while inflation fell nearly 1 percent and wages rose 3.1 percent, a new survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research & Educational Trust finds.

According to the [2009 Employer Health Benefits Survey](#) (238 pages, PDF), employees pay \$3,515 on average for family coverage while employers contribute \$9,860. Now in its eleventh year, the survey also found that since 1999 premiums have risen by 131 percent, far more rapidly than workers' wages (38 percent) or inflation (28 percent), <More at: <http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/news/story.jhtml?id=266200031>>

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

#### **THE ULTIMATE BURDEN**

Bob Herbert - Op-Ed Columnist - August 25, 2009

If you want to get a little bit of a sense of what the wars are like in Afghanistan and Iraq — a small, distant sense of the on-the-ground horror — pick up a book of color photos called, "[2nd Tour, Hope I Don't Die](#)." It's chilling.

The book is the work of the photographer Peter van Agtmael, who has spent a great deal of time following American combat troops in both countries. <More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/25/opinion/25herbert.html>>

**NOTE!!**

We have added four new books to our reading list:

History of Warfare (New sub-category)

*War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, Chris Hedges

Veteran New York Times correspondent Hedges argues that, to many people, war provides a purpose for living; it seems to allow the individual to rise above regular life and perhaps participate in a noble cause. Having identified this myth, Hedges then explodes it by showing the brutality of modern war, using examples taken from his own experiences as a war correspondent in Latin America, the Middle East, and the Balkans.

*The American Way of War*, Eugene Jarecki

From the acclaimed creator of the award-winning documentary *Why We Fight* comes a deeply thought-provoking and revelatory examination of the deepest roots of American war-making and its troubling implications for the fate of American democracy.

Observations by Reporters and Other Non-military on the Wars

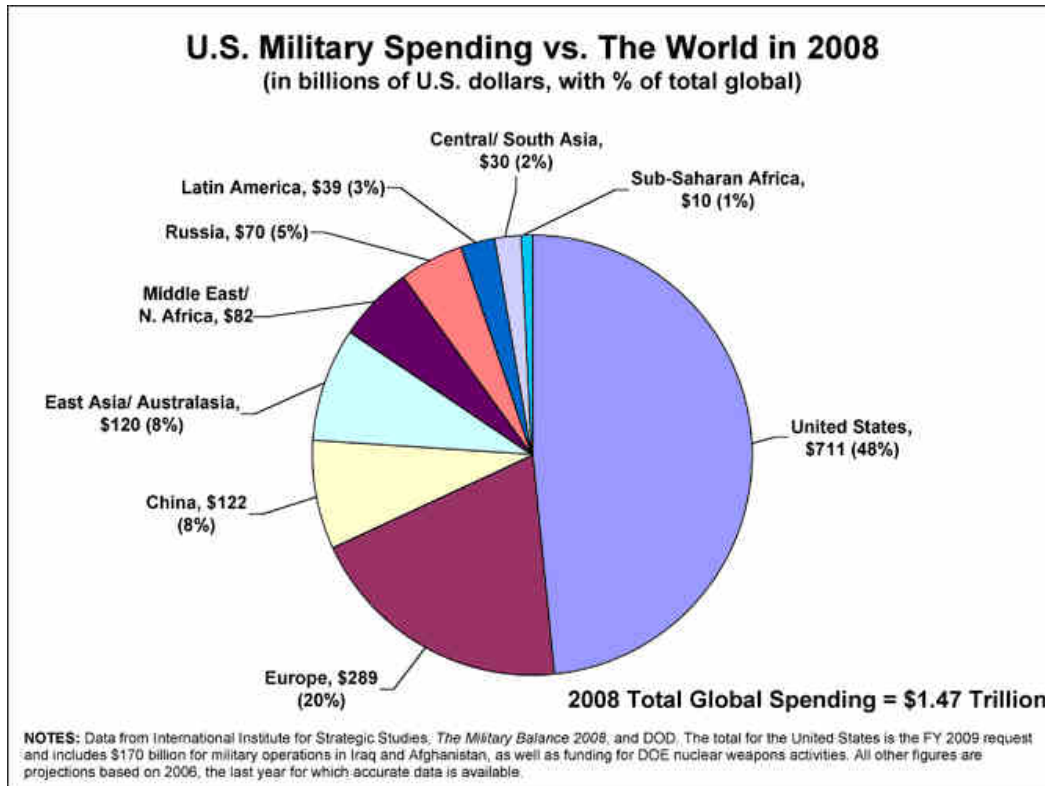
*2nd Tour, Hope I Don't Die*; Peter van Agtmael

From 2006 through 2008, Peter van Agtmael was an embedded photographer who followed the sweep of the conflicts between Iraq, Afghanistan and the United States. He captured the range of the American experience, from chaotic night raids in Iraqi cities to long patrols through isolated valleys in the mountains of Afghanistan

*The Places In Between*, Rory Stewart

In January 2002, having just spent 16 months walking across Iran, Pakistan, India, and Nepal, Stewart began a walk across Afghanistan from Herat to Kabul. Although the Taliban had been ousted several weeks earlier, Stewart was launching a journey through a devastated, unsettled, and unsafe landscape. The recounting of that journey makes for an engrossing, surprising, and often deeply moving portrait of the land and the peoples who inhabit it.

**JUST SO YOU KNOW ~**



## 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

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