

# SOUND OFF!



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THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

*“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”*

20 JANUARY 2012

## FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

### ARE WE STILL “THE SHINING CITY UPON A HILL?”

In 1975 Ronald Reagan used this quotation from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount referring to the United States. His quotation mirrored John Winthrop’s sermon in 1630 that gave rise to the idea of “American Exceptionalism”, i.e. that God had somehow chosen what was to become the United States as a special place, especially blessed. John F. Kennedy had used the same reference in 1961.

I don’t subscribe to the idea of American Exceptionalism as a religious tenet, although I know that many do.

I do, however, believe in the underlying meaning of “The Shining City Upon a Hill” as originally stated by John Winthrop in that we would be watched by the world. The idea was further expanded by President Kennedy when he said that because we are watched by all peoples, our American governments at all levels must be “constructed and inhabited by [persons] aware of their great trust and their great responsibilities”.

It has been my experience over three quarters of a century, much of it in government service and much of it spent in foreign lands, that we have been most successful when we applied those sentiments to our relations with the world.

Far more important than the “American Dream”, which is a particularly personal view of our status, is the “American Idea” as embodied in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence—“...all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness— That to secure these Rights Governments are instituted among Men... .”

When we have taken the American Idea to heart we have been successful throughout the world. When we treat all persons as worthy of those “unalienable rights”, we have shown a magnanimous and friendly face to the world.

One special class of “inhabitants” of our government are those who go forth in the uniform of the United States and who represent our nation and its ideas across the globe, in peace and war.

These latest wars have engendered act after act by military personnel that fly in the face of this fundamental idea of what it means not only be an American, but to be an American ambassador.

Abu Ghraib, rendition, torture, assassinations — even of citizens of our own country. All these don’t just become temporary news sensations, they raise the question of American values in the eyes of our allies and even our enemies.

The desecration of dead Afghanis by American Marines is the latest of these disastrous incidents.

Friends and foes depict such actions as being the true face of American values. They are wrong, of course, but they cannot be blamed for judging us, at least in part, by the worst of our actions.

After all, our own public figures and our news media delight in publicly blaming others because of the actions by the worst members of their groups.

The excuse that “sh\*t happens” in wartime is insufficient. Too many of us have been in combat and have not treated our enemies or their remains in such a fashion. Most of us who chose the military as a profession are appalled at such behavior, or we were in my day.

Today I am not so sure.

What is the training that these young soldiers get that lets them believe that such actions not only are OK, but are tacitly approved?

What sort of upbringing and what sort of military training makes these young warriors believe that this is the way to show that we are “Number 1?”

What is in the minds of those, including current politicians, who excuse such actions with a “boys will be boys” rationale?

Worst of all, what is in the minds of the military leaders who don’t seem to think that this is anything more than a PR problem?

I spent much of the ‘50s, ‘60s, and ‘70s in Germany (with time out for Vietnam of course). Eight of those years were spent in West Berlin where I saw every day German thankfulness for our presence and admiration for our actions and our way of life. We came to occupy—we stayed to protect.

In Berlin particularly we risked everything in the face of the Soviet threat. Truman and Eisenhower established that American honor was tied to Berlin’s freedom. Kennedy faced down Khrushchev over the status of Berlin even in the face of the Soviet nuclear threat.

The world saw those actions, and admired them, even honored them. We were the “shining city on a hill” to so many in the Soviet sphere and in those under the threat of their own home-grown despotism.

I have talked for many years with people all over the world who admire the United States and who either would want to live here, or to live in their nation with a system like ours.

Starting in the ‘90s that sentiment started to weaken. By the end of the first decade of this century much of that sentiment seems to have disappeared.

They don’t need to come here to get tortured., They don’t need to try our way in order to have their rights restricted or eliminated in the cause of “national security”. They don’t need a government that believes that the military answer to international problems is not only a right answer, but also is the preferred one.

They have lived that life already in their native countries and they don’t need just another version of the same old stuff.

I do not believe that we should judge ourselves totally by others’ views. We must, however, first honestly judge ourselves, our policies, and our actions, and we must do so with a clear view to the truth.

Historically, when we acted in ways that made us proud of ourselves we didn’t have to convince ourselves or others of our intent or our motives.

Our service members around the globe over the last 70 years have contributed much to the special place America has in the regard of others. They have contributed through proper behavior, charitable contact, and respect for individuals and governments.

Veterans of our (too) many conflicts have had every right to come home proud of their behavior. Most veterans also have come home angry when those of their own kind disgrace them.

I, for one, have heard too much excusing of the despicable act of these Marines in Afghanistan. We have not been admired in the past just because we can kick the crap out of others whenever we wish. We cannot excuse such actions by pointing to our enemies and saying, “If you think what we did is bad, what about what those guys did?”

Do we judge ourselves by our principles, or do we judge ourselves by the acts of some thugs in Fallujah or Mogadishu?

I have even seen reference to Achilles dragging the body of Hector behind his chariot in the *Iliad* as an excuse for this incident. Give me a break, guys! While the Trojan War happened, the *Iliad* is fiction.

While this is just one incident, we have to believe that it is indicative of a lack of training, not just in the services, but in our schools and in our homes. Somewhere along the line a young person has to be taught the idea of selfless, and honorable service.

Particularly in today’s style of war, where individual low-level leaders are called on to make life and death judgments every day, such training is essential.

Maybe such incidents are a by-product of the fact that almost no one is involved in these wars except those on the ground and their families. Their neighbors and their political leaders don’t give these wars a moment of thought day after day.

As veterans who are proud of our service and who are mightily proud of our nation., we should publicly condemn such actions.

We should tell our fellow Americans that we do not approve, and that these actions do not represent what we fought for—what we defended.

Most of us remember annual training in the laws of war. All services used the Army’s FM 27-10, *The Law of Land Warfare*. Since 2005 all services have had

available the *Law of War Handbook*, prepared by the International and Operational Law Department, of the Army's Judge Advocate General School.

For those who do not think that such laws pertain, I remind them of Article VI, Clause 2 of the Constitution which establishes treaties as an intrinsic part of the "Supreme Law of the Land."

For those who don't believe that the Rights provisions pertain to other than Americans, the 2005 handbook includes as its only Appendix *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

We veterans should be pressing our parent services to institute strict and extensive training in these laws. With present and, most likely, all future wars largely

dependent on small unit actions, the training for leaders at all levels must be thorough. All leaders must see that their own leadership holds such training to be vital to the conduct of military affairs.

Perhaps then we can work our way back toward being "The Shining City On a Hill". The military can only do so much—other broad changes in governmental policy and actions are necessary also.

The least that those in today's military and its veterans can do is to lead the way.

Once again.

**"If the equality of individuals and the dignity of man be myths, they are myths to which the republic is committed."**

Howard Mumford Jones

A final great thought from Al Martinez, LA Times columnist and Marine combat veteran who takes a slightly different but very accurate view:

**"The unreality of war has taken a quantum leap. Does that justify desecrating the bodies of those we have killed?"**

**Never. But in their way, the Marines were playing by a set of rules that exposed what war is really all about. It is full of mindless rage, thoughtless acts of violence and a consuming desire for vengeance.**

**By its inherent disrespect for life, war pisses on the whole human race."**

Thanks, Al. [Ed.]

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

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

Try these two organizations: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program [www.vetsprobono.net/](http://www.vetsprobono.net/); National Organization of Veterans' Advocates (NOVA) [www.vetadvocates.com](http://www.vetadvocates.com) .

Also, United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims "Public List of Practitioners" are members of the court's bar <http://www.uscourts.cavc.gov/practitioners/>

## ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

**THIS STORY FROM LAST SUMMER IS LISTED AS THE 20<sup>TH</sup> MOST READ STORY IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA DURING 2011 ~ SOMEONE IS PAYING ATTENTION**

### SHAMEFULLY DELAYED CARE IS KILLING AMERICA'S VETERANS

Katharine Russ - CITYWATCH LA - 12.29.2011

U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit issued a landmark decision on May 10, 2011 that medical care delays have deprived veterans of their Constitutional Rights.

In a 104-page decision, Judge Stephen Reinhardt said, "Veterans who return home from war suffering from psychological maladies are entitled by law to disability benefits to sustain themselves and their families as they regain their health. Yet it takes an average of more than four years for a veteran to fully adjudicate a claim for benefits. During that time many claims are mooted by deaths. <More at: <http://www.citywatchla.com/4box-right/2656-shamefully-delayed-care-is-killing-americas-veterans>>

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. [www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/](http://www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/)

## VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE: STATUS OF OUR CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT

Case Progress to Date:

Date	Action	Days since previous action	Days since start of case
7/23/2007	Suit filed w/Federal District Court	-	0
9/25/2007	Defendant's motion to dismiss	64	64
2/11/2008	VUFT motion for preliminary injunction	139	203
2/25/2008	Preliminary injunction hearing – denied	14	217
4/21/2008	Trial before Judge Conti	56	273
6/25/2008	Judgment unfavorable (based on jurisdiction)	65	338
7/25/2008	Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals	30	368
12/10/2008	Appeal brief filed	138	506
12/15/2008	<i>Swords to Plowshares &amp; Vietnam Veterans of America</i> file amicus brief (not accepted by court)	5	511
12/22/2008	<i>Military Spouses for Change &amp; United Spinal Association</i> file amicus brief (not accepted by court)	7	518
3/4/2009	Appeal will not be subject to Mediation	72	590
5/1/2009	VUFT's brief filed	58	648
8/12/2009	Oral arguments before 3-judge panel	103	751
9/14/2009	No agreement on mediation. 9 <sup>th</sup> Circuit agrees to adjudicate	33	784
<b>2010 No Action</b>			
5/20/2011	The 9 <sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals rules in part in our favor, specifically on the Constitutional issues in our claim.	613	1397
5/27/2011	Case Management Conference before the original trial judge, Judge Conti, in Federal District Court in San Francisco	7	1404
7/20/2011	VA has requests a hearing by the full court.	54	1458
8/10/2011	VA appeals to undo everything that has transpired over the last three years; claims veterans have no constitutional right to benefits.	21	1479
11/16/2011	Back to square 2—9 <sup>th</sup> Circuit panel ruling withdrawn	98	1577
12/13/2011	<i>En banc</i> hearing before 11 judges	27	1604
1/20/2012	<i>Today - waiting</i>	38	1642
<b>1642 days = 4 years, 5 months, 27 days</b>			

We will keep you posted

**BE A MEMBER** If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to [www.vuft.org/membership.html](http://www.vuft.org/membership.html) 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. at [www.vuft.org/membership.html](http://www.vuft.org/membership.html)

**SUPPORTING THE CAUSE** If you wish to donate to our work you may do so via PayPal or Visa on our website "Donate" page at [www.vuft.org/donate.html](http://www.vuft.org/donate.html). 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, or donate \$10 or more and we'll send you one anyway.

**The case is moving on and we must support our legal team. Please dig down and help us if you can. Any amount helps.**

**P L E A S E D O N A T E!**

[www.vuft.org/donate.html](http://www.vuft.org/donate.html)

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

**FOLLOW-UP TO LAST MONTH'S LETTER ON THE VA'S "REEVALUATION POLICY"**

*This from the writer of the original letter:*

Sandy, thanks for another great newsletter. Your editorial is fantastic. And thanks for posting the issue I raised. Just for the record, the three letters came out of three regional offices -- OK, AR & CO, but all three vets came through the OK system back in the 90's. I've done some "investigating" on my own and am being told different things depending on who I talk to. Most are calling the letter a mistake, but some are saying it's a new "policy" designed to reduce ratings (significantly) and transfer the savings to the younger vets and the newer programs. The 100%er's whose ratings are based on unemployability are getting hit especially hard and fast. Anyway, I think this story is huge and has implications for all vets. Keep up the good fight, and have a great Xmas and a super 2012.

*And this from a new friend of the organization:*

Last week I got one of those letters also: they want to reevaluate my claim, which the VA had told me to apply for and then waited - and waited - and waited, for significantly over a year...Considerably over a year. Now about a year after awarding benefits, I have received a letter that the VA wants to re-evaluate my claim, with explicit threats should I miss an appointment. It would appear the gambit is to hold off (hoping the Vet will suicide or die), then grudgingly consider giving benefits for significant life impairment (PTSD, Prostate Cancer, presumably linked to Agent Orange exposure, & other issues), then ask the Veteran to ONCE AGAIN GO THROUGH THE WHOLE PROCESS. ... It's not enough I have to deal with memories, with a 're-evaluation' I will get to again go through the whole aggravation and revisiting things I've attempted to avoid thinking about. Is there any wonder a lot of Veterans do drugs ? ~ Vic Saravia

**I DEFY YOU TO WATCH THIS AND COME AWAY DRY-EYED**

You absolutely must see this video. It is taken from a British series where a guy called Gareth Malone takes a group of people and turns them into a choir. This time he's taken a group of military wives whose husbands are all away in Afghanistan and turned them into a choir. Gareth looks about 16yrs old but is actually in his mid-30s and a Choir master for the London Symphony Orchestra, among other things. They wrote a song based on excerpts from letters written by the couples whilst apart and this is the beautiful result. The single is out in the UK on Monday and thousands have been pre-ordered and all the money raised is going to military charities. <http://www.youtube.com/user/militarywiveschoir?feature=watch>

Grace Moore, US Army Vietnam veteran, Doylestown, PA...

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

Not much happening here.

They spent the last month at home, since there apparently is nothing important for them to pay attention to.

**RETREAT - NEWS**

**IF THIS DOESN'T MAKE YOU NERVOUS .....!!**

**CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS PLAYING KEY ROLES IN U.S. DRONE OPERATIONS**

David S. Cloud - Los Angeles Times - December 29, 2011

Washington: After a U.S. airstrike mistakenly killed at least 15 Afghans in 2010, the Army officer investigating the accident was surprised to discover that an American civilian had played a central role: analyzing video feeds from a Predator drone keeping watch from above. The contractor had overseen other analysts at Air Force Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field in Florida as the drone tracked suspected insurgents near a small unit of U.S. soldiers in rugged hills of central

Afghanistan. Based partly on her analysis, an Army captain ordered an airstrike on a convoy that turned out to be carrying innocent men, women and children.

"What company do you work for?" Maj. Gen. Timothy McHale demanded of the contractor after he learned that she was not in the military, according to a transcript obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. "SAIC," she answered. Her employer, SAIC Inc., is a publicly traded Virginia-based corporation with a multiyear \$49-million contract to help the Air Force analyze drone video and other intelligence from Afghanistan.

America's growing drone operations rely on hundreds of civilian contractors, including some — such as the SAIC employee — who work in the so-called kill chain before Hellfire missiles are launched, according to current and former military officers, company employees and internal government documents.

Relying on private contractors has brought corporations that operate for profit into some of America's most sensitive military and intelligence operations. And using civilians makes some in the military uneasy. <More at: [www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-drones-civilians-201111230,0,6127185.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-drones-civilians-201111230,0,6127185.story)>

## **WHERE I GUESS SOME OF THEM WILL TAKE THEIR ORDERS FROM CONTRACTORS**

### **U.S. TROOPS QUIETLY SURGE INTO MIDDLE EAST**

David S. Cloud - Tribune Co.- January 13, 2012

The Pentagon has quietly shifted combat troops and warships to the Middle East after the top American commander in the region warned that he needed additional forces to deal with Iran and other potential threats, U.S. officials said.

<More at: <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2012/01/13/MNR11MOPB2.DTL>>

### **HOUSTON RIPOFFS OF DISABLED VETS WENT UNDETECTED FOR MORE THAN A DECADE**

Lise Olsen - Houston Chronicle - December 21, 2011

Sometimes when she watched her son standing outside his personal care home, Wylma Barnett thought the disabled ex-Marine looked homeless clad in his worn and raggedy clothes, though he had plenty of money in the bank.

The picture seemed wrong, she thought, for a man who had served his country and whose ample assets for the last 20 years were entrusted to a Houston attorney by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Instead, next month, Joe B. Phillips, 72, and his wife Dorothy, 71, are expected to stand trial for conspiracy to commit fraud and theft in a Houston federal court. They are accused of embezzling more than \$2 million from at least 28 disabled veterans, including Barnett's son, and allegedly carrying out the biggest rip-off ever uncovered in a VA program responsible for about \$3.1 billion in disabled veterans' assets nationwide.

<More at: <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Disabled-veterans-left-penniless-in-alleged-2410906.php>>

### **ARMY SUBMITS GRAVESITE STUDY OF ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY**

Secretary of the Army John McHugh released today to Congress the results of a year-long effort to ensure accountability of gravesites and records at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC). McHugh submitted the report in accordance with Public Law 111-339, which directed the Army to provide an accounting of gravesites at ANC, and put in place a plan of action for any discrepancies which may be found. <More at: <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=1497>>

### **LEJEUNE RESIDENT RECEIVES DISABILITY**

Week of December 26, 2011

A former Camp Lejeune Marine "has a medley of maladies, many of which he believes can be traced to his exposure to contaminated drinking water during the 13 years he spent on base." A letter mailed in October from the Department of Veterans Affairs has granted him 100-percent disability for colon cancer and 20 percent for bladder cancer.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/veterans-report/lejeune-resident-receives-disability>>

## **VETERANS FINDING NOTHING IS EASY ABOUT JOB MARKET ON THE HOME FRONT**

Jennifer McDermott - The Day (CT) - 01/15/2012

After serving as a sailor for 20 years, Dan Trew didn't want to get stuck in a boring office job, looking out a window and thinking about the places he had been and the things he had done in the Navy.

While he looked for a more permanent job, Trew delivered pizza in Groton and slept on his pastor's couch.

A submarine auxiliaryman who served from 1991 until May, Trew found starting over in his 40s "a daunting challenge." "I was collecting unemployment for the first time in my life, and I didn't feel right doing that, but you've got to do what you got to do to make ends meet and get by," said Trew, 47. "It was just tough."

Until he recently was hired at AAA, Trew was among a growing number of veterans finding it difficult to land a job.

While the nationwide unemployment rate continued its downward trajectory in December to 8.5 percent, the jobless rate for veterans who have served in the military since 9/11 rose to 13.1 percent.

<More at: <http://www.theday.com/article/20120115/NWS09/301159924/-1/NWS>>

## **YOUNG VETERANS WITHOUT JOBS: TOO MANY ARE LOCKED OUT OF 'RECOVERY'**

1/10/12

Young military veterans saw little to celebrate in last week's much cheered unemployment report. Data released the same day by the Department of Labor revealed that one in three young veterans was out of a job in the last quarter of 2011 -- an employment picture even worse than a year earlier, when one in five couldn't find work.

This rate is more double that of their civilian peers; the unemployment rate for all Americans age 18-24 actually decreased over the same time period.

"I definitely think it's getting worse out there," said Daniel Hutchison, 29, who started a one-man transition assistance group, Ohio Combat Veterans, last May. "Part of that has to do with the economy across the board. The unemployment rate is still high, and with veterans, it's even more complicated."

Veterans don't always know how to translate their skills in the battlefield for employers back home. And while they look for work, they're often battling post-traumatic stress disorder, which can be compounded, Hutchison said, by not finding a job.

"Veterans will sell themselves short. On their résumés, they'll just say, 'I was field artillery in Iraq for 16 months.'" Hutchison continued. "So I'll say, 'But you have leadership skills. How much training did you do? How many people did you manage?' These are all attributes that these veterans have, but they can't really see it."

<More at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/10/veterans-jobs-high-unemployment\\_n\\_1197400.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/10/veterans-jobs-high-unemployment_n_1197400.html)>

## **LONG LINES, HIGH HOPES AT VETERANS CAREER FAIR**

Andrew Lapin - January 18, 2012

Thousands of job seekers and hiring managers swarmed the Veterans Affairs Department-sponsored career fair at the Washington Convention Center on Wednesday, an event the Office of Personnel Management promises will not be the last of its kind. <More at: [http://www.govexec.com/story\\_page.cfm?articleid=49795](http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=49795)>

## **JUST SO YOU'LL KNOW THAT YOUR TAX DOLLARS ARE BEING WELL-SPENT IN THE DOD R&D EFFORT**

### **AIR FORCE'S TOP BRAIN WANTS A 'SOCIAL RADAR' TO 'SEE INTO HEARTS AND MINDS'**

Noah Shachtman - January 19, 2012

Chief Scientists of the Air Force usually spend their time trying to figure out how to build better satellites or make jets go insanely fast. Which makes Dr. Mark Maybury, today's chief scientist, a bit of an outlier. He'd like to build a set of sensors that peer into people's souls — and forecast wars before they erupt. <More at: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/01/social-radar-sees-minds/>>

## NAVY'S NEW MINE HUNTER CAN'T SEE OR STOP MINES

Spencer Ackerman - January 18, 2012 |

It's bad enough that the Navy's newest ship has had wicked problems with corrosion, missed out on the latest naval wartime missions and is generally something of a Frankenstein's monster. Now the Pentagon's top weapons tester has found problems with its abilities to find and withstand mines — which is a big problem for a ship that's supposed to be the Navy's minehunter of the future. <More at: [http://www.nextgov.com/web\\_headlines/wh\\_20120119\\_1389.php](http://www.nextgov.com/web_headlines/wh_20120119_1389.php)>

## ARMY'S VIRTUAL REALITY PLAN: A DIGITAL DOPPELGANGER FOR EVERY SOLDIER

Katie Drummond - January 18, 2012 |

The Army wants soldiers of the future to be all they can be — onscreen and off.

As the military's enthusiasm for virtual reality training continues to grow, the Army's got a new plan to make the programs freakily immersive: National Defense magazine is reporting that the Army wants to give every soldier a digital doppelganger — a custom avatar they can use throughout their stints in the military, and in myriad virtual training environs, from urban combat practice to cultural prep. <More at: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/01/army-virtual-reality/>>

## VA PROVIDING CREDIT MONITORING TO MISIDENTIFIED VETERANS

WASHINGTON, Jan 20, 2012 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- The Department of Veterans Affairs is offering free credit monitoring to more than 2,200 Veterans whose personal information, including social security numbers, was posted on Ancestry.com following the mistaken release of data through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

"VA places the highest priority upon safeguarding the personal information of our Veterans," said Jerry L. Davis, VA's chief information security officer. "When lapses occur, we will immediately take prompt remedial action, such as notification."

The family history website, which provides access to genealogical and historical information, had requested information from VA about deceased Veterans. Under FOIA, VA is obligated to release requested records upon written request unless they may be withheld. Therefore, VA provided the website with the data on March 18, 2011.

On Dec. 13, 2011, after the information had been posted on the history website, VA learned that it included data about some living Veterans because some of the death reports provided to the website were inaccurate.

<More at: <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/va-providing-credit-monitoring-to-misidentified-veterans-2012-01-20>>

## **TO THE COLORS – GATHERINGS**

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
Every Sunday	1300-1600	Wilson & San Vicente Blvds. NE Corner, Los Angeles, CA	Save Our Veterans Land	Veterans Revolution	
1/21		Washington DC	Resource Fair	VA Office of Public Affairs	202-745-4037
1/26	0900-1600	San Diego Convention Center	Military Spouse Symposium & Career Fair	MOAA & Blue Star Families	<a href="#">Info &amp; Registration</a>
1/28		UC-Berkeley 100 César E. Chávez Student Center	Veterans' Toolkit Workshop	Coming Home Project	<a href="#">Info &amp; Registration</a>
1/31		Jacksonville NC	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Kelley Hamilton</a>	910-347-2121
1/31-2/3		Lackland AFB San Antonio TX	The Wall That Heals	USAF Security Forces Museum Foundation	
2/4-2/5		Albany GA	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Elder Max Simmons</a>	478-275-4899

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



## TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

### **UNEMPLOYMENT RATE SKYROCKETS FOR VETERANS**

by [Richard Cranium Follow](#) Tue Jan 03, 2012

Paul Rieckhoff at [JAVA](#) posted [information] today regarding the unemployment rate for military veterans. Top five states for veteran's unemployment:: Michigan (30%), Indiana (24%), Minnesota (23%), Montana (20%) Tennessee (20%)

... The unemployment rate for veterans aged 20 to 24 has averaged 30 percent this year, more than double that of others the same age...compared with 12 percent for other vets. The employment gap cannot be explained by a simple factor like lack of a college degree — despite their discipline and training, young veterans fare worse in the job market than their peers without degrees.

Employers and veterans seem to view each other as alien species. Managers, few of whom have military experience themselves, may fear the aftereffects of combat or losing reservists to another deployment. They may have difficulty understanding how military accomplishments translate to the civilian world.

*[the article also included current data on total compensation claims against the VA (878,746) and the number which are past 125 days since filing (552,869 – 63%). The numbers keep increasing every month.*

<More at: <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/01/03/1051114/-Unemployment-Rate-Skyrockets-for-Veterans>

### **ANOTHER VIEW**

*Since most of us, veteran and non-veteran alike believe that we are all in this continuing jobs recession together, I took a look at how veterans' unemployment rates compared to overall employment rates, state-by-state.*

16 states plus Puerto Rico and Washington DC have a veteran unemployment rate that is the same or better than the overall rate [Utah (16%), Louisiana, North Dakota, Florida, Rhode Island, Missouri, North Carolina, Delaware, Illinois, New Jersey, Nebraska, Hawaii, South Carolina, Kentucky, Oregon, D.C., Maryland, Puerto Rico (100%), where 100% equals the same rate, and less-than 100% means that veterans are doing better.

21 states have a veteran unemployment rate that is 1½ times or greater than the overall rate [Arizona (150%), Iowa, Georgia, Texas, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, Connecticut, New York, Maine, Tennessee, New Mexico, Indiana, Kansas, Montana, Michigan, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Minnesota (388%)].

Two examples: if you just look at veteran's unemployment rates, a state like Virginia doesn't look too bad in 25<sup>th</sup> place at 10.6%, but when you compare it to the overall unemployment rate in the state (6.2%) Virginia drops to 39<sup>th</sup> place with 171% veteran-to-general-population unemployment rate. Minnesota looks bad whichever way you look at it, but at 388% veteran/general unemployment rate, Minnesota veterans are pretty obviously being ignored.

It is obvious that in over 2/3 of our states, veterans aren't getting as much attention as other local unemployed.

So much for all of the hypocritical "Honor Our Heroes", "Thanks For Your Service", and especially "Welcome Home" crap that is dished out every day.

### **HOW MANY US CASUALTIES IN IRAQ? GUESS AGAIN.**

Dan Froomkin - Nieman Watchdog - 30 December 11

Reports about the end of the war in Iraq routinely describe the toll on the U.S. military the way the Pentagon does: 4,487 dead, and 32,226 wounded. The death count is accurate. But the wounded figure wildly understates the number of American servicemembers who have come back from Iraq less than whole.

The true number of military personnel injured over the course of our nine-year-long fiasco in Iraq is in the hundreds of thousands - maybe even more than half a million - if you take into account all the men and women who returned from their deployments with traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress, depression, hearing loss, breathing disorders, diseases, and other long-term health problems.

We don't have anything close to an exact number, however, because nobody's been keeping track.

<More at: <http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/266-32/9181-focus-how-many-us-casualties-in-iraq-guess-again>>

## **SOME OF THE REAL ANSWER CAN BE FOUND HERE**

### **VCS RELEASES NEW IMPACT REPORT**

Using original source documents obtained by their extensive use of the Freedom of Information Act from both the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Veterans for Commonsense has compiled and updated their quarterly report quantifying the human cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<More at: <http://veteransforcommonsense.org/2012/01/20/new-veterans-for-common-sense-impact-report-is-now-available/>>

## **EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT SICK, IT ISN'T EASY OUT THERE**

### **VETERANS FIND A RUDE WELCOME**

Winston Ross - The Register-Guard Eugene OR - Jan 15, 2012

EDITOR'S NOTE: As the wars in the Middle East wind down, tens of thousands of veterans are returning home, joining those who already have made it back. But in a still-weak economy, the transition back into civilian life is not always easy, and some are struggling to find work while facing barriers that their civilian counterparts don't.

SPRINGFIELD — At the moment, Sgt. Maj. Shawn Vinson is basking in the glory of being home. After a year in Afghanistan, a birthday and Father's Day and Thanksgiving away from his family, the 38-year-old veteran surprised each of his children at their respective schools last month upon his return to Springfield, his wife aiming the video camera as the kids leapt into his arms.

Vinson is a family man. Family is why he left the Army National Guard in 1998 after the birth of his first child, Brad. Even the one weekend a month and few weeks a year he spent away from home was too much, and his electrician job at Monaco Coach provided enough income. Then he and his wife, Angela, both were laid off from Monaco, on the same day in March 2009 in the thick of the worst U.S. economy in decades. After months of searching fruitlessly for a new job, and with mortgage payments stacking up, Vinson reluctantly wound up choosing what seemed the only way to keep the family house from foreclosure: the military.

He's among legions of veterans who made similar choices, thanks to a lost job or inability to afford college. And what they're finding out now, as the war in Iraq draws to a close and President Obama reduces troop levels in Afghanistan, is that the economy they left isn't the same as the one they're coming home to.

<More at: <http://www.registerguard.com/web/newslocalnews/27437819-41/veterans-job-vinson-employment-employers.html.csp>>

## **AN EXCELLENT SUMMARY ARTICLE WITH GOOD LINKS TO SUPPORTING DATA**

### **A TOUGH HOMECOMING FOR WAR VETERANS**

The Week's Editorial Staff - The Week – 27 January 2012 Issue

Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are returning home with unprecedented physical and mental wounds.

More than 2.3 million soldiers have served in Afghanistan and Iraq over the past decade, and official fatality and casualty numbers — 6,179 dead, 47,000 wounded — fail to capture the extensive physical and psychological injuries many of them have suffered. More at: <http://theweek.com/article/index/223423/a-tough-homecoming-for-war-veterans>

## **THE NEXT TWO SHOW THAT YOU CAN EMPHASIZE DIFFERENT ISSUES WITH THE SAME DATA**

### **MILITARY SUICIDES DROP, OTHER PROBLEMS ON RISE**

January 20, 5:15 AM

The number of suicides among soldiers has been leveling off, but there has been a dramatic jump in domestic violence, sex crimes and other destructive behavior in a force that has been stressed by a decade of war, according to an Army report released Thursday.

<More at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/military-suicides-drop-other-problems-on-rise/2012/01/19/gIQAYLcMDQ\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/military-suicides-drop-other-problems-on-rise/2012/01/19/gIQAYLcMDQ_story.html)>

## **ACTIVE-DUTY SOLDIERS TAKE THEIR OWN LIVES AT RECORD RATE**

Elisabeth Bumiller - January 19, 2012

WASHINGTON — Suicides among active-duty soldiers hit another record high in 2011, Army officials said on Thursday, although there was a slight decrease if nonmobilized Reserve and National Guard troops were included in the calculation.

The Army also reported a sharp increase, nearly 30 percent, in violent sex crimes

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/20/us/active-duty-army-suicides-reach-record-high.html>>

## **DOGS CAN BE VETS' BEST FRIENDS, HIS DOG SINGLE-HANDEDLY SAVED HIS LIFE**

JEFF WILKINSON - The State - Dec. 19, 2011

Columbia's 1st Sgt. Will Roberts, a U.S. Army paratrooper, has been deployed into combat seven times with the elite 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. Kosovo. Bosnia. Two deployments to Iraq. Three to Afghanistan.

Each of those deployments involved intense, front-line fighting with Roberts leading some of the nation's most hardened soldiers: Army Rangers.

"I lived for that war stuff," said Roberts, 45.

Today, Roberts is one of the estimated 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). And with the Iraq war winding down – the last U.S. troops are leaving that country this month – more and more service members are returning home. Many are returning with injuries, including psychological trauma, and many are in the Midlands.

... One of the more innovative programs to help treat service members diagnosed with PTSD is service dogs.

Much like seeing-eye dogs, service dogs help their owners through the trials of daily life. In this case, the dogs serve as a calming influence for a service member who sees danger in every person he meets and every room he enters.

When Roberts becomes concerned, R.C. places a gentle paw on his foot, or curls around his legs, as if to say, "Everything is OK. There is no danger here." <More at: <http://able2know.org/topic/181860-1>>

## **THE MOVEMENT IS SLOWLY SPREADING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY**

### **EL DORADO AND RIVERSIDE COUNTIES TO BEGIN OPERATING VET COURTS**

CalVet Press Release

SACRAMENTO – On January 5, 2012, the El Dorado and Riverside County Superior Courts will begin their first day of hearings in specialized veterans treatment courts. These new "Vet Courts" are the result of planning and collaboration between local veterans services advocates, the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), and Superior Court judges. Over the past year, CalVet has worked with individual counties to help set up these Vet Courts, which take a veteran's psychological and physical issues into account when that individual has broken the law.

<More at: <http://www.calvet.ca.gov/News/2011/12/22.aspx>>

## **PLEASE EXPLAIN.**

## **THE NUMBERS ARE RISING AND WE ARE SHUTTING DOWN ANOTHER HOSPITAL??**

### **VETERANS WARY OF VA'S PLANS**

George Ledbetter - December 20, 2011

Military veterans from around northwest Nebraska crowded a church meeting hall in Gordon on Wednesday Dec. 14 to hear first-hand from Veteran's Administration officials about a proposal announced two days earlier to close the VA hospital in Hot Springs, S.D., shift many services to Rapid City, S.D. and the Fort Meade facility near Sturgis, S.D., and contract with local clinics and hospitals for some services. <More at: [http://rapidcityjournal.com/thechadronnews/latest/veterans-wary-of-va-s-plans/article\\_21371ef8-2b4b-11e1-b82e-001871e3ce6c.html#ixzz1hOCRxIFB](http://rapidcityjournal.com/thechadronnews/latest/veterans-wary-of-va-s-plans/article_21371ef8-2b4b-11e1-b82e-001871e3ce6c.html#ixzz1hOCRxIFB)>

**THIS ARTICLE ENGENDERED THE COMMENT BELOW IT FROM SOMEONE WHO KNOWS  
MONEY SAVED AT MISDIAGNOSED VETS' EXPENSE**

31 December 2011

The Vietnam Veterans of America says the Pentagon has “systematically and wrongfully discharged” more than 22,000 veterans since 2001 “on the basis of so-called ‘personality disorder’” – rather than post-traumatic stress disorder – to deny them medical care and save the Pentagon \$12.5 billion in medical and disability payments. <More at:

<http://www.veteransresources.org/2011/12/money-saved-at-misdiagnosed-vets-expense/>>

COMMENT:

sandra kellogg 8 January 2012 at 8:18 pm #

My son is an Iraq Veteran and has been suffering from all the symptoms of ptsd and after several attempts to get him help at the local VA medical center we are still pulling our hair out! Bi-polar has been brought up 2x. One time it was after a 10 minute conversation with a dr. in a clinic visit. That night he overdosed on his medication he received that day. Recently at a meeting, during his current miserable stay in a VA psych ward, bi-polar was brought up again! This is insane! The family is fighting for his life and our veteran is finally willing to accept some help and they are dragging their heels on diagnosing and placing him in a residential program! He is not addicted to alcohol or drugs and has been in crisis since July, approx. 4 months after returning from Iraq. You name the ptsd signs and I have seen them all! As a matter of fact I learned about PTSD by watching it happen to my son! I am fearful for all the returning soldiers and what their fate will be! It is disgraceful to watch my son sit and stare at the walls of this unit as he awaits a decision. The family is fearful for his well-being if we bring him home and during this holding period there are no treatment programs offered. Basically he sits around all day with almost nothing to do and no organized groups. He has seen his social worker ONCE in 9 days. I could go on with all the crisis my son has been through because of the voids in the system, ut to be brief: sleeping issues, eating issues(lost 35 pounds in the last 2 months, national missing person in Sept., speeding ticket, some alcohol abuse, several suicide threats, totaled a vehicle(sober), can't sit still, huge startle reflex, edgy, isolating, etc.....basically a walking robot. He has completed all their recommended after care programs after his last stay in the stickin' psych ward and has continued weekly therapy and reaches out at the vet center. The last incident of holding a gun to his head is enough for me! Thank God it was not loaded and a BB gun, but I believe it was a practice run! Please someone, please this needs to end! He is a US Army Veteran from the Iraq war lets show some respect and put action to all the lip service!

**ONE OF OUR FAVORITE ORGANIZATIONS IS DOING SOMETHING REAL TO HELP WITH  
THE REINTEGRATION PROBLEM. BRAVO, SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES!**

**COMBAT TO COMMUNITY CULTURAL COMPETENCE TRAINING PREPARES LAW  
ENFORCEMENT**

January 19, 2012

The tragic violence recently perpetrated by Iraq veterans is being met with widespread response. Reports by friends and family indicate that Benjamin Barnes, who fatally shot a Washington State park ranger, and Itzcoatl Campo, who is accused of stabbing four homeless men in California, both suffered from post-traumatic stress.

... Swords to Plowshares, Institute for Veteran Policy developed as part of their Combat to Community Program, an eight-hour training for law enforcement, “Law Enforcement Crisis Interaction with Veterans.” The course is certified by the California Commission of Police Officers Standards and Training (POST) and to date Swords to Plowshares has trained over 2,000 officers throughout California.

The training details the current era veterans’ experiences, as well as provides a cultural competency component that illustrates the transitional challenges these veterans face when returning home. The clinical component of the training focuses on providing officers with tools to identify veterans who may be suffering from PTS and TBI, recognizing common triggers, and how to deploy effective de-escalation techniques to help ensure a positive and safe interaction between veterans and law enforcement.

For more information, please contact: Colleen Corliss, Communications Director Office: 415-655-7248; Mobile: 202-415-6101 (media only) Email: [ccorliss@stp-sf.org](mailto:ccorliss@stp-sf.org) ~ Visit their website at [www.swords-to-plowshares.org](http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org)

**THE VA PAYS ~ IT ONLY TOOK 14 YEARS ~ WHO PAYS FOR THE SUFFERING WHILE HE WAITED? ONLY THE VETERAN HIMSELF. GIVES NEW MEANING TO "SNAFU"**

**ANDERSON COUNTY VETERAN GETS BACK PAYMENT FOR AGENT ORANGE**

**EXPOSURE**

Bob Fowler – Knoxville News Sentinel - January 17, 2012

CLINTON — For a 66-year-old Vietnam veteran, the check he received Saturday was a long-overdue thank-you for his military service,

He received \$389,475 in retroactive Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, Anderson County Veterans Service Officer Leon G. Jaquet said.

... Jaquet said the man, who wished to remain anonymous for now, came into his office last summer seeking VA benefits. At that time, Jaquet said, "he wasn't getting anything,"

A records check showed the man's initial request in 1998 for benefits as a result of his exposure in Vietnam to the herbicide Agent Orange had been put on hold. He'd had a heart attack then, but at that time, that ailment wasn't an "approved presumptive condition" for benefits, Jaquet said. In 2010, the VA declared that heart disease and two other ailments were presumably caused by exposure to the toxic herbicide. That opened eligibility for disability compensation to about 86,000 Vietnam veterans. <More at: <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2012/jan/17/anderson-county-veteran-gets-back-payment-for/>>

**THIS ISSUE DEMANDS COMMENT**

**PANETTA ANNOUNCES NEW MEASURES TO COMBAT SEXUAL ASSAULT**

Chris Carroll - Stars and Stripes - January 18, 2012

**DOD sex assault prevention efforts fall short, critics say**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military won't tolerate sexual assault, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said Wednesday as he announced new Defense Department measures designed to -reduce what has been an increasingly reported crime.

... In 2011, there were 3,191 reports of sexual assault, Panetta said, a number that has been rising since 2005, when the Defense Department began tracking sexual assault reports using the current methodology. But because sexual assault frequently goes unreported, the true number of sexual assaults that took place in 2011 is probably closer to 19,000, he said.

<More at: <http://www.stripes.com/news/panetta-announces-new-measures-to-combat-sexual-assault-1.166274>>

**MAKE THE PUNISHMENT TRULY FIT THE CRIME!**

Rape and other forms of sexual assault and assault on the weak are the acts of cowards, and should be treated as such.

In the services, bravery—heroism is honored. There is no room in any honorable unit or service for these cowards. Their crime of assault is compounded by their crime of dishonoring the unit and the service. Cowardice should be shamed.

There is an old punishment that would seem quite appropriate for anyone convicted of rape, sexual assault, or spousal or child abuse. Instead of quietly spiriting them off to a (probably light) sentence, why not submit them to public shaming? When a supposed "hero" acts shamefully, he shames not just himself but his unit and service.

Why not stand him on parade before his unit, snip off all his buttons, and drum-march him out of the front gate to the waiting paddy wagon? And then send him off for a harsh sentence, not just a token one.

**FIRST LADY TO RALLY SUPPORT FOR VETERAN HEALTH**

Patricia Kime - Staff writer - Jan 11, 2012

More than 100 of the nation's top medical schools are teaming with first lady Michelle Obama's [Joining Forces](#) initiative, pledging a collaboration to share information and increase educational programs on military-related injuries.

... The goal is to "share information through a robust collaborative forum" on veterans' health issues, ranging from amputation and burns to post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury to ensure veterans' continued care, explained Joining Forces Executive Director Brad Cooper.

<More at: <http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/01/military-first-lady-to-rally-support-for-veteran-health-011112w/>>

## **VETERANS CRISIS HOTLINE**

The hotline for anyone needing immediate help with mental health issues is **800-273-8255**.

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

### **OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY 20 JANUARY 2011**

#### **OP’N IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,721/507 DAYS)**

KILLED US	4,408/76
WOUNDED US [1/3/12]	31,921/2,507
OTHER US CASUALTIES [1/3/12]	40,374/2,616
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [1/3/12]	223/12
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139/1
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [1/19/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [1/15/12]	≥ 114,641–1,455,590
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS[9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

#### **OP’N ENDURING FREEDOM (3,757 DAYS)**

KILLED US	1,886
WOUNDED US [1/3/12]	15,183
OTHER CASUALTIES US [1/3/12]	15,440
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [1/3/12]	74
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED COALITION	990
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY[7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010)	≥ 8,813
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	\$800,409,077,949
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$493,932,347,231

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

### **NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF JANUARY 17, 2012**

This week the Army, Navy and Air Force announced a decrease in activated reservists while the Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced an increase. The net collective result is 2,273 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 63,690; Navy Reserve, 4,630; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 9,380; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,240, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 763. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 83,703, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found on line at

<http://www.defense.gov/news/d20120117nqr.pdf>

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

### **VETERAN, IMMIGRANT ~ STILL SERVING**

#### **AMERICA’S OLDEST FEMALE VETERAN HELPS FORMER MILITARY WOMEN FIND JOBS**

Dec 21, 2011

(NBC) - Good Will of Southern California held a special event on Tuesday to promote jobs for veterans and the star of the conference was someone who is believed to be the oldest living female veteran.

Bea Cohen, who came to the United States from Romania at the age of 10 in 1920, is now approaching her 102nd birthday.

When the United States joined World War II, she was all about giving back to her adopted country. <More at:

<http://www.kpictv.com/story/16373646/oldest-female-veteran-helps-former-military-women-find-jobs>>

## **THIS OUGHT TO MAKE OUR OLDER VETERANS WHO HAVE NEITHER COMPUTERS NOR SMARTPHONES FEEL MUCH BETTER!**

### **TO BETTER CONNECT WITH VETS, ALL VA MEDICAL CENTERS NOW ON FACEBOOK**

Federal Daily Staff - Dec 22, 2011

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that all of its 152 medical centers are now on Facebook.

"This event marks an important milestone in the overall effort to transform how VA communicates with veterans and provides them the health care and benefits they have earned," said VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. "By leveraging Facebook, the department continues to expand access to VA, and embrace transparency and two-way conversation." <More at: [https://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs?sk=app\\_7146470109](https://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs?sk=app_7146470109)>

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

#### **FOR OUR NAVY VETERANS WITH AGENT ORANGE ISSUES**

##### **AGENT ORANGE: ALPHABETIZED SHIPS LIST**

Last updated: January 2012

If your vessel is not included in the Mobile Riverine Force, ISF Division 93 or listed designations (see "[Find Your Ship](#)"), check the alphabetized list of ships below.

To search for your ship, look under the first letter of the formal ship name. For example, if your ship's name is Dennis J. Buckley, look under the letter "D" for Dennis. Ships will be regularly added to the list based on information confirmed in official records of ship operations.

Currently there are 214 ships on this list. [Ship not on the list and you think it should be?](#)

Questions about your eligibility for [compensation benefits](#)? Contact your [nearest VA benefits office](#).

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/list.asp>

##### **WALGREEN TRICARE CONTRACT EXPIRES**

Week of January 16, 2012

The expiration of the retail pharmacy contract between Express Scripts, Inc. and the Walgreens pharmacy chain means Walgreens is no longer a TRICARE pharmacy network provider as of Jan. 1. TRICARE beneficiaries changing from Walgreens pharmacy can simply take their current prescription bottle to their new network pharmacy to have the prescription transferred. To find a nearby network pharmacy, use the "find a pharmacy" feature on Express-Scripts website at [www.express-scripts.com/tricare](http://www.express-scripts.com/tricare). Beneficiaries who want help finding a pharmacy, changing their medications to Home Delivery, or who have other questions can contact Express Scripts at 877-885-6313. For more information, visit the TRICARE website at [www.tricare.mil/walgreens/](http://www.tricare.mil/walgreens/).

For a related article on CVS and TRICARE Pharmacy, see the [Military Advantage Blog](#).

#### **IF YOU WANT TO KNOW JUST HOW MANY TROOPS AND BASES WE HAVE OVERSEAS, CHECK THIS PAGE**

[http://nationalpostnews.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/fo1029\\_usbases12001.gif](http://nationalpostnews.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/fo1029_usbases12001.gif)

## 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.org](mailto:scook@vuft.org); 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 [mailto:scook@vuft.org](mailto:mailto:scook@vuft.org)

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

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