

# Sound Off!



Vol. II, No 5

The Newsletter of VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, Inc.

*"Veterans standing up for each other"*

25 October 2006

## First Call - THEME OF THE ISSUE AND/OR CLIPS & QUOTES

### How do you know what truth is?

We are flooded daily with all sorts of statistics and snippets about what is happening to our world. How are we to know what is the truth, by which I mean the **WHOLE** truth?

The Dow is at a new High – but the Dow gain is well below historical averages and the S & P is still down 12% - we get the good Dow news but not bad Dow news nor the S & P news. There were 59,000 new jobs last month – we are millions of jobs below where we should be if jobs had kept up with the population; "Where should we be?" is the unanswered question. All those new jobs – but we lost manufacturing jobs and most of the new jobs are in the service sector paying minimum or slightly higher, a level of income that is barely 55% in purchasing power of what it was in 1968. The annual federal deficit increase is cut in half – but there was supposed to be an increase, wasn't there?

We begin to understand that knowing something that is true is nowhere near the same as knowing the whole truth. Nowhere does this apply more than in military and veterans' issues.

Military pay is increased by 2.2% - but the actual cost of living core index increase was 3%.

"Strong Employment for Veterans" the press release from the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee said on 12 October; "... the veterans' unemployment rate is 3.5%." – but the Bureau of Labor Statistics hasn't published a report on veterans employment status since August 2005. That report told us that while 81.1% of the non-veteran work force was counted, only 55.6% of the veteran workforce was being counted since so many are no longer in the work force. Did that affect the numbers? Should have. Also, among men 18 to 24, veterans had a higher jobless rate than non-veterans (17.2% versus 10.4%). What's changed in the last 14 months to suddenly make the picture so rosy? What is the whole truth?

"Army Meets Recruiting Goal" – but did it also make up for the 6,500 shortfall from last year? The Army didn't advertise that it doubled the number who scored below acceptable aptitude scores. They didn't announce openly that 17% were

accepted with waivers for medical, moral, and criminal issues that would have caused them to be rejected in other times.

"The administration has doubled the amount spent on veterans in the budget" – after first cutting it then doubling the remainder. And they don't make public that the waiting list for VA enrollment tops 500,000, when three years ago it was 260,000 – where is all that cash going?

Telling the truth – all of it – was once not just a ritual on the witness stand. Telling the truth was the "manly" thing to do. When you made a mistake you "owned up". Responsibility was the telling characteristic of honest men and women. There was shame in the act of lying to the American people, to include obscuring the truth by telling half-truths.

So what's the answer to our question? I am afraid it is that we cannot know for certain what the truth is, particularly when there are those who wish to obscure it, and who have the power to bury "the rest of the story". One thing is sure, truth isn't a relativistic concept when the facts are knowable. You may have an opinion about the meaning of the facts, and your opinion may differ from mine, but the underlying facts have the same common value for both of us.

So as always, when you hear a claim of either victory or disaster, check – verify – find other sources – make sure that the sources aren't self-referential. But above all, don't take unsupported statements as truth without working on finding out if they are true or not.

We at VUFT remain committed to the truth on veterans' issues, but we often play hell finding it. We hope that we help you find the truth about what is happening to veterans and their families.

Finding truth is worth the effort as long as we remember, as Oscar Wilde says in *The Importance of Being Earnest*,

*"The truth is rarely pure and never simple."*

But we must also be wary, because,

*"A lie told often enough becomes the truth."* - Vladimir I. Ulyanov [Lenin] [Ed.]

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

### **wake up! spread the news!**

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

### **check out the website!**

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT [WWW.VUFT.ORG](http://WWW.VUFT.ORG). CHECK OUT THE "CANDIDATES" PAGE, WHICH IS OUR EFFORT TO LIST ALL VETERANS RUNNING FOR STATE-WIDE AND FEDERAL OFFICE IN THE U.S.; IT IS BEING UPDATED DAILY. PLEASE HELP US MAKE THIS AS COMPLETE A LIST AS POSSIBLE BY SENDING CANDIDATE INFO TO [SCOOK@VUFT.ORG](mailto:SCOOK@VUFT.ORG).

## Assembly - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

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

**Supporting the cause** If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on [our website](#) "Join" page. Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method.

If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at [rhandy@vuft.org](mailto:rhandy@vuft.org) or the Vice Chair at [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

It's not only the person who went over to Iraq who suffers: it's the families who end up living without a loved one, families who have to drastically alter their life plans because of some senseless injury, families who are torn apart because it is very difficult to live with someone who has been involved in a war where they know there is no such thing as winning, no such thing as gaining ground. They come back drastically changed even if they don't have PTSD. Watch them flinch in a restaurant or walking down the street when a car backfires. Try to be a spouse sleeping next to someone with unbearable night sweats and nightmares. Try being a child who no longer has a parent with the loving patience they once had. It affects a generation and more. I know. I've been in that family. It's why we only send our service members into war when there is an overwhelming reason to commit those troops and every other method of conflict resolution has been exhausted. What we are doing to these service members and their families is not patriotic – it's inhumane.

Cheryl C

### **Part of a letter from a WWII vet to the Rutland, Vt. Herald**

Since 2001, I have been receiving glaucoma medication from the VA (Veterans Administration) satellite office in Bennington. This past April, I was informed that I would have to go to the VA hospital in White River Junction in order to receive any more medications. The kicker is that there is approximately a one-year wait for an appointment at the hospital — no appointment means no medications. The three medications that I take cost me approximately \$250 a month.

The following quote is from a letter that I received from the VA: "This is to notify you that our Eye Clinic is currently experiencing long delays in scheduling new patient appointments. This is due to an increasing number of veterans seeking eye care for the first time. The wait time for an eye exam is indefinite. We cannot determine how long you may have to wait for an eye exam given the recent VA budget cuts."

## RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

As is usual this year, legislators are home campaigning, so there is very little on the legislative front [They spent fewer than 100 days in session this year].

I requested a sort on the "THOMAS" website of all bills containing the word "veteran" and it returned 1000 entries. It is bills like these that are the claim to fame for politicians of all stripes, asserting that they are "Supporting the Troops". The only problem is they write and they talk, but they don't work and they don't fight for the military, veterans, and their families. Here are the top 15

from that list, all of which are languishing in committee, and are unlikely to be acted on by a lame duck Congress. Only a handful of the rest became law, and most of those renamed Post Offices after veterans. Some "Support"! [Ed.]

1. S.3176 Veterans Privacy Protection Act of 2006
2. S.1991 Services To Prevent Veterans Homelessness Act
3. S.2266 Disabled Veterans Fellowship Act of 2006 and a companion bill H.R.4746 Services to Prevent Veterans Homelessness Act
4. S.614 IS Veterans Prescription Drugs Assistance Act and a companion bill in the House H.R.6282 Improving Medication Access for Veterans Act
5. HR.4183 Recognition of Forgotten Atomic Veterans and their Surviving Spouses Act of 2005
6. S.1646 To provide for the care of veterans affected by Hurricane Katrina.
7. H.R.3082 Veteran-Owned Small Business Promotion Act of 2005
8. H.R.6273 To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for enhanced protections against identity theft related to the public filing of separation forms of members of the Armed Forces,...
9. S.3475 Homes for Heroes Act of 2006 and its companion in the House H.R.5561 [Don't you love the name? This one was to give special consideration in HUD for veterans' housing needs]
10. H.R.5490 Veterans Identification Protection Act [pretty much killed by the VA committee]
11. S.1947 Specially Adapted Housing Grants Improvements Act of 2005
12. S 3545 Comprehensive Homeless Veterans Assistance and Prevention Act of 2006
13. H.R.4046 To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide authority, in certain cases, for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide care for the newborn children of veterans who have been provided maternity care by the DVA
14. H.R.5960 Homeless Veterans Assistance Act of 2006
15. S.3984 Comprehensive Assistance for Veterans Exposed to Traumatic Stressors Act of 2006

## **They did get a little mischief done before they left**

### **Drug Discounts Blocked**

Tom Philpott - October 12, 2006

Pressured by the White House and drug industry lobbyists, Congress has killed a Senate-passed provision that would have forced pharmaceutical manufacturers to grant the Department of Defense deep discounts on drugs dispensed through the TRICARE retail pharmacy network. <More at: [www.military.com/features/0,15240,116699,00.html](http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,116699,00.html)>

## **but before they left they got a real earful**

### **Congressional PTSD Testimony**

Garett Reppenhagen - Thu, 10/05/2006

I am Garett Reppenhagen. I served in Iraq as a Cavalry Scout and sniper in US Army's 1st Infantry Division from 2004-2005. Unfortunately I have personal experience with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as do many of the people I served with. Recall where you were last year today, and now try to imagine the last entire year you were in a combat zone in Iraq. Imagine you are in constant danger from hidden road side bombs and exposed to ambushes and sniper fire. Imagine that your home is constantly harassed with mortar explosions and rocket attacks while you try to sleep. Imagine you witnessed your closest friend being torn apart by enemy fire. Imagine you discover that the person you thought was an insurgent that you killed turns out to be an innocent child, or some one who looks similar to your own mother. Now imagine you lost a limb, you lost your eyesight, you lost your friend, you lost your sanity and you lost your innocence for an unappreciative society and an unconcerned elected government.

I didn't expect to come home to find there is no plan for addressing the needs of veterans like myself, and with each passing day, I grow more and more concerned that there is no plan from the VA on how to serve the thousands of veterans like me who have served our country proudly and now find ourselves without the help we need. I don't understand how, despite being in the middle of not one, but two wars, our government is actually scaling back on services that are critical for men and women trying to re-enter civilian society. I don't understand how in 2006 we're still debating if PTSD exists when people have suffered from war trauma for decades. We have seen that the consequences of war affect those who serve, and those close to them, for years to come. And I don't understand why our country would choose not to take steps to make sure veterans like me get the care we deserve before we end up another generation abandoned by the country we fought to defend. <More at: [www.ivaw.org/node/242](http://www.ivaw.org/node/242)>

### **Anti-Terror Law Concerns Red Cross**

Associated Press - October 20, 2006

GENEVA - The international Red Cross said Thursday it has "concerns and questions" over whether a new U.S. anti-terror law signed by President Bush complies with the Geneva Conventions on the conduct of war. The legislation, signed into law Tuesday, authorizes military trials of terrorism suspects, eliminating some of the rights defendants usually are guaranteed under U.S. law while allowing continued harsh interrogations of terror suspects, a provision Bush has said was vital.

The Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross said it was studying the law, which it said was very complex and entailed both positive and negative elements. But it said it had some immediate reservations.

"Our preliminary reading of the new legislation raises certain concerns and questions," said Jakob Kellenberger, president of the Red Cross. "The very broad definition of who is an 'unlawful enemy combatant' and the fact that there is not an explicit prohibition on the admission of evidence attained by coercion are examples," he said.

<More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,117377,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,117377,00.html)

### **Data Suggests Vast Costs Loom in Disability Claims**

Scott Shane - October 11, 2006

Nearly one in five soldiers leaving the military after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan has been at least partly disabled as a result of service, according to documents of the Department of Veterans Affairs obtained by a Washington research group. The number of veterans granted disability compensation, more than 100,000 to date, suggests that taxpayers have only begun to pay the long-term financial cost of the two conflicts. About 567,000 of the 1.5 million American troops who have served so far have been discharged.

"The trend is ominous," said Paul Sullivan, director of programs for Veterans for America, an advocacy group, and a former V.A. analyst.

Mr. Sullivan said that if the current proportions held up over time, 400,000 returning service members could eventually apply for disability benefits when they retired. About 2.6 million veterans were receiving disability compensation as of 2005, according to testimony to Congress by the V.A. The largest group of recipients is from the Vietnam era. Of the 1.1 million who served in the Middle East during the Persian Gulf war in 1991, 291,740 have been granted disability compensation.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/2006/10/11/washington/11veterans.html?ex=1161835200&en=326df21129a9b9a8&ei=5070](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/11/washington/11veterans.html?ex=1161835200&en=326df21129a9b9a8&ei=5070)>

### **Army admits troops will stay in Iraq for four more years**

Robert Burns - October 12, 2006

For planning purposes, the Army is gearing up to keep current troop levels in Iraq for another four years, a new indication that conditions there are too unstable to foresee an end to the war. Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the Army chief of staff, cautioned against reading too much into the planning, which is done far in advance to prepare the right mix of combat units for expected deployments. He noted that it is easier to scale back later if conditions allow, than to ramp up if they don't.

"This is not a prediction that things are going poorly or better," Schoomaker told reporters. "It's just that I have to have enough ammo in the magazine that I can continue to shoot as long as they want us to shoot."

Even so, his comments were the latest acknowledgment by Pentagon officials that a significant withdrawal of troops from Iraq is not likely in the immediate future. There are now 141,000 U.S. troops there. At a Pentagon news conference, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, Gen. George Casey, said that as recently as July he had expected to be able to recommend a substantial reduction in U.S. forces by now. But that plan was dropped as sectarian violence in Baghdad escalated.

While arguing that progress is still being made toward unifying Iraq's fractured political rivalries and stabilizing the country, Casey also said the violence amounts to "a difficult situation that's likely to remain that way for some time."

<More at: [www.capitolhillblue.com/content/2006/10/army\\_admits\\_tro.html](http://www.capitolhillblue.com/content/2006/10/army_admits_tro.html)>

### **US adjusting to longer, more difficult fight in Iraq**

Jim Mannion - Oct 12, 2006

With violence spiking in Iraq and no end in sight, the United States is uneasily adjusting for a longer, more difficult fight that could tie down US ground forces for four more years. General George Casey, the top US commander in Iraq, served notice in Washington this week that levels of violence there have never been higher and are likely to stay high for some time.

... "We assume it will still get worse before its get better," said Major General William Caldwell, the US military spokesman in Baghdad. "We expect violence to continue to increase over the next two weeks, until the end of Ramadan."

Bringing the violence under control, Casey said here Wednesday, "is going to be a long-term process. It's not going to be something that we're going to get done quickly." <More at: [http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20061013/ts\\_afp/usiraqmilitarybush](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20061013/ts_afp/usiraqmilitarybush)>

### **Problems Afflict U.S. Army Program To Advise Iraqis**

Greg Jaffe – Wall Street Journal - October 18, 2006; Page A1

One of the biggest shocks for Lt. Col. Nick Demas and his troops came before they even deployed to Iraq. The colonel's soldiers, most of them inexperienced reservists from Maryland, had been tapped to serve as advisers to the Iraqi army. Their job was to live with, train and mentor an Iraqi force buffeted by poor morale, desertions and corruption.

President Bush has touted such advisory teams as key to the U.S. strategy for stabilizing Iraq and bringing American troops home. So Col. Demas and his troops expected some of the best instruction the Army had to offer. What they got was a "phenomenal waste of time," the colonel wrote from Iraq last fall, in a report to his superiors.

"In my 28 years of military service I have never seen such an appalling approach to training," he wrote. "Nowhere else in the Army system would this have been acceptable." His soldiers received only a few hours of instruction in Arabic language, Iraqi culture and advising foreign forces, says Col. Demas, who had previously served in Special Forces units. ([Read Col. Demas's after-action report.](#)<sup>1</sup>)

Other advisers have been just as scathing. "By the time the training was finished, soldiers were demoralized, motivation was nonexistent and the team motto came from the Jo Dee Messina lyric, 'my give-a-damn's busted,'" wrote Lt. Col. James Goodwillie, who led advisers in Iraq, in a review that was passed to senior Army officials last fall. ([Read Lt. Goodwillie's after-action report.](#)<sup>2</sup>)

Senior U.S. military officers in Iraq and the Pentagon say their primary focus is getting Iraqi forces to take over more of the fighting as quickly as possible so U.S. forces can pull back. The 10- to 12-man advisory teams are central to that effort.

<More at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB116113605252296021.html>>

### **Major Change Expected In Strategy for Iraq War**

Michael Abramowitz and Thomas E. Ricks - Washington Post Staff Writers - October 20, 2006; A01

The growing doubts among GOP lawmakers about the administration's Iraq strategy, coupled with the prospect of Democratic wins in next month's midterm elections, will soon force the Bush administration to abandon its open-ended commitment to the war, according to lawmakers in both parties, foreign policy experts and others involved in policymaking.

Senior figures in both parties are coming to the conclusion that the Bush administration will be unable to achieve its goal of a stable, democratic Iraq within a politically feasible time frame. Agitation is growing in Congress for alternatives to the administration's strategy of keeping Iraq in one piece and getting its security forces up and running while 140,000 U.S. troops try to keep a lid on rapidly spreading sectarian violence.

<More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/19/AR2006101901907.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/19/AR2006101901907.html)>

### **Find the truth in the next three articles**

#### **Army lowers standards to boost recruiting**

Lolita C. Baldor - October 10, 2006

The U.S. Army recruited more than 2,600 soldiers under new lower aptitude standards this year, helping the service beat its goal of 80,000 recruits in the throes of an unpopular war and mounting casualties. The recruiting mark comes a year after the Army missed its recruitment target by the widest margin since 1979, which had triggered a boost in the number of recruiters, increased bonuses, and changes in standards.

The Army recruited 80,635 soldiers, roughly 7,000 more than last year. Of those, about 70,000 were first-time recruits who had never served before. According to statistics obtained by The Associated Press, 3.8 percent of the first-time recruits scored below certain aptitude levels. In previous years, the Army had allowed only 2 percent of its recruits to have low aptitude scores. That limit was increased last year to 4 percent, the maximum allowed by the Defense Department. ... About 17 percent of the first-time recruits, or about 13,600, were accepted under waivers for various medical, moral or criminal problems, including misdemeanor arrests or drunk driving. That is a slight increase from last year, the Army said.

<More at: [www.capitolhillblue.com/content/2006/10/army\\_lowers\\_sta.html](http://www.capitolhillblue.com/content/2006/10/army_lowers_sta.html)>



## **Pentagon defends quality of U.S. military recruits**

Will Dunham - Reuters - 10 Oct 2006

WASHINGTON, Oct 10 (Reuters) - The Pentagon on Tuesday defended the quality of recruits entering the military even as the Army accepted older enlistees and more with past criminal problems, no high school diplomas and lower aptitude marks.

"I don't think they're lesser-quality recruits," David Chu, U.S. under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told a Pentagon briefing. <More at: [www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N10358112.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N10358112.htm)>

## **Debt keeping many service members home**

Steve Liewer - Union-Tribune Staff Writer - and Thomas Watkins - Associated Press - October 20, 2006

High levels of debt are costing thousands of military personnel their security clearances and preventing them from serving critical overseas duty. Records obtained by The Associated Press indicate the number of Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force personnel stripped of security clearances rose from 284 in 2002 to 2,654 last year, a ninefold increase. The Army, which has the most deployed troops, refused numerous requests to provide data, citing confidentiality rules.

"We are seeing an alarming trend in degrading financial health," said Capt. Mark Patton, the commander of Point Loma Naval Base, who has testified before Congress and the California Legislature about service members' financial stress.

<More at: [www.signonsandiego.com/news/military/20061020-9999-1n20mildebt.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/military/20061020-9999-1n20mildebt.html)>

## **they think that they have found a solution**

## **Ohmigod! Drill sergeants ordered to be warm & cuddly**

October 11, 2006 - Pauline Jelinek

Hollywood may have to tone down its portrayal of the military's screaming, in-your-face boot camp drill sergeant. In today's Army, shouting is out and a calmer approach to molding young minds is in, says the head of Pentagon personnel. The Army says it has reduced by nearly 7 percent the number of recruits who wash out in the first six to 12 months of military life.

"Part of it is changing the nature of how it treats people in basic training," David S. Chu, undersecretary for personnel and readiness, said Tuesday. That means "less shouting at everyone, in essence, which some of you may remember from an earlier generation as being the modus operandi," he said. <More at: [www.capitolhillblue.com/content/2006/10/ohmigod\\_drill\\_s.html](http://www.capitolhillblue.com/content/2006/10/ohmigod_drill_s.html)>

## **To the Color - GATHERINGS**

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
10/25-26		Detroit, MI	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Michael Bethune</a>	313-576-3345
10/27		Cedar Rapids	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Donald Tyne</a>	319-892-5160
10/27-29		Cedar Rapids	Stand Down	<a href="#">Donald Tyne</a>	319-892-5160
11/3		Kansas City	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Bob Waechter</a>	816-753-1866
11/4		Inverness, FL	Resource Fair	<a href="#">John Young</a>	352-628-4357
11/7-8		Shreveport, LA	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Carolyn Green</a>	318-841-4812
11/9	5:30 PM	Hotel Nikko, 222 Mason St. San Francisco	Swords to Plowshares Veterans' Day Dinner	Tickets \$150 <a href="http://www.stp-sf.org">www.stp-sf.org</a>	415 -252-4787 ext. 343
11/9		Denver, CO	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Patricia Lease</a>	303-322-6891
11/11		Los Angeles	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Doris Nickelson</a>	310-545-2937

**Let us know about meetings and gatherings and we will advertise them**

Note: We are a non-partisan organization that does not take a position, as an organization, on this war. We will advertise all veterans' events, regardless of purpose.

## **TATTOO - Current Issues**

### **VA Takes Nine Months to Locate Data on Disability Claims by Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars**

National Security Archive Update, October 10, 2006

Report Indicates that 1 in 4 Veterans of the Global War on Terrorism Claim Disabilities

Washington, DC, October 10, 2006 - One in four veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars are filing disability claims, according to records released by the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) under the Freedom of Information Act after nine months of denying their existence and posted today on the National Security Archive Web site.

The VA responded to the Archive's original January 2006 FOIA request for documents about the number of disability benefits claims filed by veterans from the current war in Iraq by claiming that no documents existed, apparently because the reports concern the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) rather than being limited to the Iraq War. Notably, one of the reports indicates that GWOT is the "military name for the current wars in and around Afghanistan and Iraq." A similar report was released in December 2005 detailing Gulf War veterans' benefit activity. An updated copy of this report was released in March 2006.

Only after the Archive administratively appealed the VA's "no documents" claims and advised the VA that it was prepared to file a lawsuit did the agency manage to locate the records. <More at: <http://www.nsarchive.org>>

### **VA refutes House Democrat study on Vet Center woes**

Rick Maze - Staff writer - October 20, 2006

The Department of Veterans Affairs is defending its Vet Center program in the face of a critical congressional report, saying there is no waiting list for mental health counseling and that all veterans without appointments "are welcome."

In a statement responding to a Thursday report from the Democratic staff of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, VA officials said readjustment services being provided to returning Iraq and Afghanistan combat veterans and their families "far exceed those we have provided to veterans of any previous conflict."

The report, based on a survey of team leaders at 60 of the 279 Vet Centers, said the VA is not prepared to handle mental health problems for returning Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom troops. Among the 16-page report's findings:

- 40% of Vet Centers have been forced to put veterans into group therapy when they really needed individual counseling.
- 27% are restricting marriage and family counseling.
- 20% lack capacity to help families of service members with post-traumatic stress disorder cope with the problems.
- 25% percent are limiting services and establishing waiting lists.

VA officials said the report is simply wrong. <More at: [www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-2300062.php](http://www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-2300062.php)>

### **Across U.S., one in four veterans seek benefits**

James W. Crawley - Media General News Service - October 21, 2006

WASHINGTON -- One in four veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts have filed for VA disability benefits. The new claims come as the Department of Veterans Affairs battles a backlog of disability claims, mostly from older veterans, with some veterans waiting years for a final ruling.

"There's a wave of folks with issues coming home, and we're not prepared to deal with it," said Paul Rieckhoff, executive director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.

More than 152,000 men and women -- 27 percent of personnel who have left the military or been demobilized from the reserves or National Guard after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan -- have filed for disability benefits, according to VA documents. In all, more than 1.3 million troops have deployed, but most remain on active duty. <More at:

[http://www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD%2FMGArticle%2FRTD\\_BasicArticle%09s=1045855935235&c=MGArticle&cid=1149191274478&path=!health!healthology](http://www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD%2FMGArticle%2FRTD_BasicArticle%09s=1045855935235&c=MGArticle&cid=1149191274478&path=!health!healthology)

## One state's experience - multiply it by 40

### **Thousands of Va. veterans wait**

Peter Bacque - TIMES-DISPATCH Staff Writer - October 15, 2006

Virginia veterans wait for months and years for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to act on their claims for help. Thomas E. Anderson, 59, of Halifax was disabled as a result of his service as an infantryman in Vietnam. Processing his claim took the VA more than a year, he said.

"I would have preferred it to be done quicker and more efficiently," Anderson said, "but I am grateful it was done."

Virginia is the home to 744,000 military veterans, almost 10 percent of the state's population. Virginia veterans have 15,632 benefit claims backlogged with the VA, according to Steve Smithson with the American Legion's national office in Washington. Those claims include 10,646 for service-related disability, he said.

"We've had some go as long as 10 years," said Roger Sullivan, a veterans advocate with the Military Order of the Purple Heart at McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center here. <More at:

[www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD/MGArticle/RTD\\_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1149191160408](http://www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD/MGArticle/RTD_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1149191160408)>

### **Many Veterans Lose Health Benefits**

Laura Ungar - Courier-Journal (Louisville, Kentucky) - Oct 16, 2006

Vietnam veteran Jack Vance figured that if he ever lost his health insurance, he could always get care at Louisville's veterans hospital. That was part of the deal when he joined the Navy in 1961, he said -- and that deal "should be forever."

But under federal rules blamed on budget constraints, Vance and millions of other middle-class veterans who weren't injured in the military can no longer enroll in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs health-care system. The change occurred in 2003, and news of it has gradually trickled down to veterans. Yet with the government now promising money to replace Louisville's aging veterans hospital on Zorn Avenue, there's a growing chorus of complaints from veterans who say a longstanding promise to them has been broken.

Under the 2003 enrollment policy, a single veteran in Louisville who earns \$32,600 or more, and doesn't have a service-connected injury or illness, is not allowed to enroll in the VA medical system -- although those enrolled before Jan. 17, 2003, are grandfathered in, and there's a special provision for veterans returning from Iraq or Afghanistan.

The Washington Post has reported that as many as 10 million veterans who aren't in the system wouldn't be allowed to enroll under the new rule. In just the past three years, more than 250,000 veterans who sought care at the nation's VA hospitals have been turned away because of the new rule. VA officials say the changes were necessary, given limited funds, the growing numbers of veterans seeking care, and the need to focus on those with service-connected disabilities and the poor.

<More at: [www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061015/NEWS01/610150384](http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061015/NEWS01/610150384)>

### **Some veterans die waiting for benefits**

James W. Crawley - Media General News Service - Oct 18, 2006

WASHINGTON - Thousands of veterans, many who fought in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, have been waiting years for their disability claims to be decided by a little-known appeals court here. The delays have been so long that some veterans have literally died waiting.

"The backlog has never been longer than now," said Randy Reese, national service director for Disabled American Veterans.

The appeals court is at the crest of a bureaucratic tsunami that has hundreds of thousands of veterans waiting months and, more often, years for disability benefits. With one in four veterans of the battles in Iraq and Afghanistan already filing for VA disability benefits, the wait is likely to get longer.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims is the last resort for most veterans whose claims for disability payments have been denied. Its seven judges, appointed by the president for 15-year terms, review cases from the VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals and determine whether the VA erred in denying claims or in determining the level of a veteran's disability.

During the last year, the appeals court received 3,729 new cases -- a record, said Norman Herring, the court's clerk and executive officer. At the same time, it decided 2,842 cases. More than 300 new cases are filed monthly, Herring said, and the court now has 6,080 pending cases.



Congress and veterans organizations are pressuring the appeals court to eliminate the backlog, which is blamed on changes in veterans' benefits law, the loss of experienced judges and a marked increase in claims. Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, predicted the backlog could reach 10,000 cases in five years.

<More at: [www.mcdowellnews.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=MMN/MGArticle/MMN\\_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1149191206577](http://www.mcdowellnews.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=MMN/MGArticle/MMN_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1149191206577)>

## **Battles continue as soldiers returning from war suffer from post-traumatic stress**

Dana Hull - San Jose Mercury News

The rat-a-tat-tat was so familiar. Stephen Edwards dropped to one knee and took cover behind a door. "BRAVO TEAM," he yelled to his 10-year-old daughter, Lauren, and her perplexed friends. "On my six, 300 meters, MOVE!"

Lauren? he wondered. What the hell was his little girl doing in a war zone? Then he realized. This wasn't his California National Guard unit. This wasn't a battlefield north of Baghdad. This was Booksin Elementary School in San Jose, Calif., and the rat-a-tat-tat was a construction crew's nail gun. This was another flashback.

This was PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder. The psychiatric condition that so many Vietnam veterans brought home is now haunting another generation of returning soldiers. <More at: <http://www.centredaily.com/mld/centredaily/15819350.htm>>

## **Taps - Passings and War Statistics**

### **National Guard and Reserve Mobilized as of October 18, 2006**

This week, the Army and Marine Corps announced an increase in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Air Force and Navy had a decrease. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 451 more reservists mobilized than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 80,856; Navy Reserve, 5,996; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 6,806; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,222; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 265. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 101,145, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2006/d20061018ngr.pdf>.

### **OIF/OEF - HACK DATE TUESDAY 24 OCTOBER 2006**

#### **OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM**

KILLED US	2,803
*OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 9/30]	≥44,779
KILLED UK	119
KILLED OTHER COALITION	118
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	645
KILLED CONTRACTORS	355
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 35,607
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 49,610
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+

#### **OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM**

KILLED US	343
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 9/30]	5,729
KILLED COALITION	199
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	597
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	32,034

*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>

## afterthoughts

### The Supreme Court of the United States, on considering the suspension of *habeas corpus* by President Lincoln

Justice David Davis, for the majority  
US Supreme Court, *Ex parte Miligan* (1866)

#### In part

“No graver question was ever considered by this court, nor one which more nearly concerns the rights of the whole people, for it is the birthright of every American citizen when charged with crime to be tried and punished according to law.

...The Constitution of the United States is a law for rulers and people, equally in war and in peace, and covers with the shield of its protection all classes of men, at all times and under all circumstances. No doctrine involving more pernicious consequences was ever invented by the wit of man than that any of [the Constitution’s] provisions can be suspended during any of the great exigencies of government. Such a doctrine leads directly to anarchy or despotism, but the theory of necessity on which it is based is false, for the government, within the Constitution, has all the powers granted to it which are necessary to preserve its existence...

...This nation, as experience has proved, cannot always remain at peace, and has no right to expect that it will always have wise and humane rulers sincerely attached to the principles of the Constitution. Wicked men, ambitious of power, with hatred of liberty and contempt of law, may fill the place once occupied by Washington and Lincoln, and if this right is conceded, and the calamities of war again befall us, the dangers to human liberty are frightful to contemplate. If our fathers had failed to provide for just such a contingency, they would have been false to the trust reposed in them. They knew -- the history of the world told them -- the nation they were founding, be its existence short or long, would be involved in war; how often or how long continued human foresight could not tell, and that unlimited power, wherever lodged at such a time, was especially hazardous to freemen. For this and other equally weighty reasons, they secured the inheritance they had fought to maintain by incorporating in a written constitution the safeguards which time had proved were essential to its preservation. Not one of these safeguards can the President or Congress or the Judiciary disturb, except the one concerning the writ of habeas corpus.

It is essential to the safety of every government that, in a great crisis like the one we have just passed through, there should be a power somewhere of suspending the writ of habeas corpus. ...Unquestionably, there is then an exigency which demands that the government, if it should see fit in the exercise of a proper discretion to make arrests, should not be required to produce the persons arrested in answer to a writ of habeas corpus. The Constitution goes no further. It does not say, after a writ of habeas corpus is denied a citizen, that he shall be tried otherwise than by the course of the common law; if it had intended this result, it was easy, by the use of direct words, to have accomplished it. The illustrious men who framed that instrument were guarding the foundations of civil liberty against the abuses of unlimited power; they were full of wisdom, and the lessons of history informed them that a trial by an established court, assisted by an impartial jury, was the only sure way of protecting the citizen against oppression and wrong. Knowing this, they limited the suspension to one great right, and left the rest to remain forever inviolable. But it is insisted that the safety of the country in time of war demands that this broad claim for martial law shall be sustained. If this were true, it could be well said that a country, preserved at the sacrifice of all the cardinal principles of liberty, is not worth the cost of preservation. Happily, it is not so.”

#### **And finally -from one of the founders**

“A little patience, and we shall see the reign of witches pass over, their spells dissolve, and the people, recovering their true sight, restore the government to its true principles. It is true that in the meantime we are suffering deeply in spirit, and incurring the horrors of a war and long oppressions of enormous public debt ... If the game runs sometimes against us at home we must have patience till luck turns, and then we shall have an opportunity fo winning back the principles we have lost, for this is a game where principles are at stake.”

Thomas Jefferson  
1798, after the passage of the Sedition Act

## 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.]

---

---

## **veterans UNITED FOR TRUTH, Inc.** **advisory board**

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

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

## **Executive board**

CHAIR BOB HANDY  
VICE CHAIR SANDY COOK  
SECRETARY DON KATZ  
TREASURER RUSS WEED  
COMMUNICATIONS RIC SCHROEDER  
EVENTS ERIK JENSEN  
MEMBERSHIP RUSS WEED

MATERIALS JAIME RIVERA  
MESSAGE MARTY U'REN  
OUTREACH TOM MULLENS  
AT LARGE JIM COOK  
AT LARGE RON DEXTER  
AT LARGE THOMAS O'SHAUGHNESSY  
NEWSLETTER SANDY COOK

### Fair Use Notice

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

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

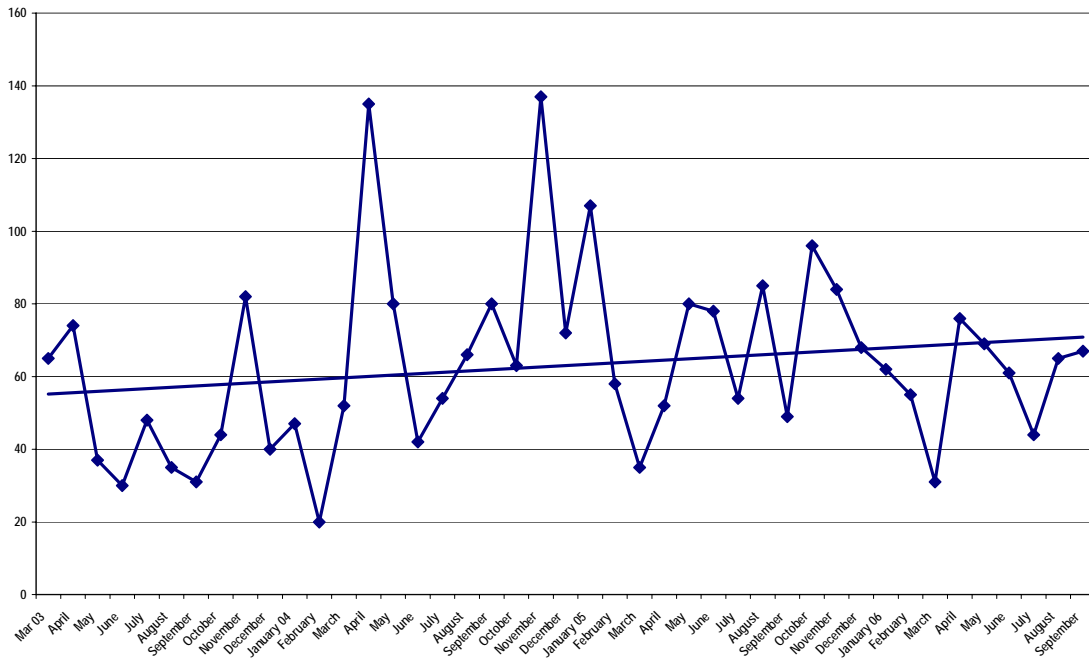
Want to join us? Please apply for membership at [www.vuft.org](http://www.vuft.org) It's FREE!

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

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

## Add-on - part of the cost of staying the course

**Total Casualties per Month - Trend**



**Numbers - Long Term Trend - to 2010**  
*[44 Months In - 44 Months More]*  
**6200+ Projected Dead**

