

SOUND OFF!



VOL. V, NO 8

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 DECEMBER 2009

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

WHERE HAVE ALL THE CHEERLEADERS GONE?

DISCLAIMER: What you are about to read is not a VUFT position, it is my opinion only. Many of our members disagree with my views on this subject. I welcome any rebuttal or comment, which I will publish.

In 2002, several months after the beginning of the Afghan War in October 2001, 93% of Americans supported the war effort; that number is now 50%.

According to an 11 November [report](#) by the Pew Research Center, 54% of Americans believe that the Taliban are a major threat to the US but 76% of that same group (41% of the total) believe that we should pull the troops out immediately. Go figure! In the same report, 43% believe that the Taliban is no threat at all!

Now for the kicker. Of all Americans, only 25% follow the news on the Afghanistan War closely. Only 25% pay attention but 95% have an opinion. Amazing!

Republicans who cheered for both wars now attack the President for his recent decision saying that it is too much, too little, or the wrong idea.

Democrats and Independents most of whom supported the original war in Afghanistan and who voted for the President, even though he clearly stated that he would get us out of Iraq and would pursue the war in Afghanistan vigorously, are now deserting him in droves and attacking him everywhere.

The most fascinating argument is that we should “solve” the problem in Afghanistan by leaving them to their own deserts. Then with Afghanistan “solved” we can tackle the problems in Pakistan.

Apparently those few who pay attention to the news on our wars believe that these are self-contained problems – wholly existing within the borders of these two nations – thus they can be dealt with as independent problems.

Such an idea shows monumental ignorance of the situation. We can only begin to understand the problem when we admit that the boundaries of most of the nations in the world were drawn by empire-building Europeans who hardly had the best interests of the locals in mind. They certainly didn’t ask the locals where they thought the borders should be.

So the Taliban, which has its greatest support among the Pashtun, is a product of a tribal group that doesn’t even recognize the 1600-mile long border that Henry Durand drew on a map in 1893. An Afghan Pashtun is more closely allied with his Pakistani cousins than he is with any central government we might foist on him.

Believing that you can deal with a problem in Afghanistan separately from the problems in Pakistan, or the varied other problems in this region is, in short, idiocy.

One might as well say that we can deal with a pandemic in Iowa separately and differently and only after we deal with the same pandemic in Nebraska.

The borders don’t mean a thing – it is the problem that must be dealt with. To deal with the problem you have to first understand the problem, don’t you?

At some future time we must help deal with the poverty, corruption, low literacy, high infant mortality, short life expectancy, lack of human rights, not to mention the external meddling for commercial gain and all of the other causations of the whole of the region’s problems. If we don’t eventually help in these areas the larger problems will assuredly recur.

For now we have to come to grips with the overarching problem that a nuclear armed Pakistan is under assault from forces – external and internal – that

can take the government down. If that happens, the entire world is faced with a radical group of 8th century thinkers who would have no compulsion to withhold use of that terrible force. They have no concept of the broader consequences of the use of those weapons from either a scientific or a geopolitical point of view.

Thus we face a foe who's understanding of the world predates the Crusades, and who, if successful, will be armed with the most dreadful weapon devised by man, and will be unafraid to use it. We will end up trying to deal with ignorant men (not stupid – ignorant) as if they would respond using western logic, and that is a sure route to folly if not disaster.

Contributing to the problem is that the Pakistani military and the intelligence services have long supported the same *jihadi* forces that would destroy their nation as it exists today. These agencies of the current government continue to provide support to the Taliban covertly while mounting overt attacks against the weaker and more public parts of the same groups.

At the heart of the problem is a whacked-out religious fundamentalism that attempts to mask the problem as a religious one rather than a political, cultural and economic one. (Westerners have a real problem with dealing with any problem that smacks of religion; but then, our enemies seem to know that.)

We are not fighting a religious war even if they are.

Even though we want everyone to enjoy the freedoms that a true democracy brings, we also are not fighting a war to extend democracy to either country.

We are fighting a war for our safety in the face of a real and describable threat.

I want our troops home as much as any person alive. I want us to stop spending money abroad when so much is needed at home. I want our President and the Congress to worry about the real problems we have here at home. I agree with General Eisenhower:

“I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.”

But make no mistake! The problem we face – one centered in Afghanistan but extending far beyond that desolate country – is a problem that must be dealt with now or the rest will never be meaningful or possible.

For these reasons I support what my President is doing, but where are his other supporters? The ranks of the cheerleaders are exceedingly thin these days.

My opinion – humble or otherwise – is that most of his former supporters are so disengaged from the

realities of the situation that they can only define the problem in terms of their foregone solutions.

“The world must be happy and peaceful therefore stop fighting the war and all will be well.”

“We cannot fight a war without fighting for human rights so, since we apparently can't win that one, we must stop fighting.”

“My personal issue is so important that this war is just keeping us from realizing it – so stop spending money on the war and get on with my cause.”

There is one sure way to get everyone from all sides back to reality and this is to enact three simple actions.

1. **Activate the draft** – a draft for all with no loopholes. If you can't fight, then you can earn a soldier's pay working elsewhere in government service for two years. (Start with Congress and their kids?)
2. **Implement a war tax** – hit everyone with a 5% surcharge on taxes, and fully implement an excess profits clause on businesses, limiting their profit on war-related manufacture and services.
3. **Eliminate the use of contractors** for any services that properly are the province of government (use the draftees instead).

Those three acts alone would set the reality and the seriousness of the situation firmly in the minds of the American public. It would give them an unmistakable stake in the game – a stake they obviously do not now have. Those three acts might recapture the spirit that fortified the American people from 1941 to 1945.

It wouldn't hurt to support these acts with open reporting on the war situation and clear discussions on goals, progress, and expected end-results.

Finally, we don't need a resurrection of the Nixon/Kissinger *realpolitik*, which more often than not was less about geopolitics and more about real trade, real business and real power and was an affirmation for the power- and profit-hungry.

Instead we need a real commitment to our country, it's interests, the interests of our allies, and the place of our country in the global scheme of things as leader, exemplar, friend, and an implacable foe of those who would threaten us.

“We can get the new world we want, if we want it enough to abandon our prejudices, every day, everywhere. We can build this world if we practice now what we said we were fighting for.”

Gwen Bristow
Novelist 1903-80

REVELLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

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

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: On 12 August we appeared before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. An article from the LA Times on 24 August summarizes the results so far < latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24_0_1423297_story>

Case Progress to Date:

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

9/25/2007 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

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

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

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

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

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

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

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants' Reply Brief filed

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

8/12/09 Oral arguments

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

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

12/10/09 NTR

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

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

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

D O N A T E!

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

IT'S OFFICIAL; DD-214S ARE NOW ONLINE.

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214s: <http://vetrecs.archives.gov/>

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files.

Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents.

Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request,

delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mailroom and processing time.

Please pass this information on to former military personnel you may know and their dependents.

Gordon Hammond

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

HOUSE CHAIRMAN CALLS DELAYED PAYMENT TO VETERANS 'AN INSULT'

Michael O'Brien - 11/11/09

Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-Calif.) urged the federal government to cut through red tape in deploying benefits.

"People have died before they've gotten their benefits or they've lost their houses because they didn't have a check coming in," Filner said during an interview on Federal News Radio. "What I would like to do is just cut through all [the] red tape."

The chairman said that the government's slowness to respond to claims from disabled veterans is "an insult."

<More at: <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/67379-house-chairman-says-delayed-disabilities-payment-to-vets-an-insult>>

SENATE PASSES SWEEPING REFORM FOR VETERANS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

November 19, 2009

Bill would help wounded, homeless, women, and rural veterans and family caregivers

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today the U.S. Senate voted 98-0 to pass the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2009, a sweeping reform bill sponsored by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel K. Akaka (D-Hawaii) for wounded warriors and the families who care for them. S. 1963 merges two veterans' health bills which passed the Committee with unanimous bipartisan support this summer, only to be blocked from a floor vote by a single Senator until today.

<More at: <http://intensedebate.com/empty.php>>

HOUSE BILL SEEKS IMMUNITY FOR GAY SERVICE MEMBERS DURING 'DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL' HEARINGS

Lisa Leff - Associated Press Writer - December 2, 2009

Gay service members who reveal their sexual orientations during congressional testimony would be immune from forced discharges under a bill introduced Wednesday, as lawmakers prepare to consider repealing the ban on gays serving openly in the U.S. military. The legislation's author, U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Fla., said the bill is needed to ensure that Congress has reliable and relevant witnesses at its disposal if the House holds hearings next year on the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

The bill also would protect from retaliatory personnel actions any members of the military who testify for or against lifting the 16-year ban. <More at: latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sns-ap-us-military-gay-testimony.0.5943554.story>

KUCINICH TO FORCE HOUSE VOTE ON TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Sabrina Eaton - The Plain Dealer - December 09, 2009

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich plans to force a House of Representatives vote early next year on whether to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Cleveland Democrat announced Wednesday that he has begun [circulating a letter to colleagues](#) that asks if they'd be willing to co-sponsor his two resolutions to "trigger a timeline for a timely withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Pakistan."

<More at: http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2009/12/kucinich_to_force_house_vote_o.html>

RETREAT – NEWS

OBAMA SETS FASTER TROOP DEPLOYMENT TO AFGHANISTAN

David E. Sanger and Peter Baker - December 2, 2009

WASHINGTON — President Obama has decided to expedite the deployment of 30,000 additional American troops to Afghanistan over the next six months, in an effort to reverse the momentum of Taliban gains and create urgency for the government in Kabul to match the American surge with one using its own forces, according to senior administration officials.

In bringing the total American force to nearly 100,000 troops by the end of May, the administration will move far faster than it had originally planned. <More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/02/world/asia/02policy.html>>

OBAMA DEFENDS US WARS AS HE ACCEPTS PEACE PRIZE

Ben Feller - Dec 10, 2009

OSLO (AP) - President Barack Obama entered the pantheon of Nobel Peace Prize winners Thursday with humble words, acknowledging his own few accomplishments while delivering a robust defense of war and promising to use the prestigious award to "reach for the world that ought to be."

A wartime president honored for peace, Obama became the first sitting U.S. president in 90 years and the third ever to win the prize - some say prematurely. In this damp, chilly Nordic capital to pick it up, he and his wife, Michelle, whirled through a day filled with Nobel pomp and ceremony.

And yet Obama was staying here only about 24 hours, skipping a slew of Nobel activities. This miffed some in Norway but reflects a White House that sees little value in extra pictures of the president, his poll numbers dropping at home, taking an overseas victory lap while thousands of U.S. troops prepare to go off to war and millions of Americans remain jobless.

Just nine days after ordering 30,000 more U.S. troops into battle in Afghanistan, Obama delivered a Nobel acceptance speech that he saw as a treatise on the use and prevention of war. He crafted much of the address himself and the scholarly remarks - at about 4,000 words - were nearly twice as long as his inaugural address.

In them, Obama refused to renounce war for his nation or under his leadership, saying defiantly that "I face the world as it is" and that he is obliged to protect and defend the United States.

"A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaida's leaders to lay down their arms," Obama said. "To say that force is sometimes necessary is not a call to cynicism, it is a recognition of history."

<More at: <http://apnews.excite.com/article/20091210/D9CGK3S00.html>>

ADMIRAL MIKE MULLEN: US IS LOSING WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

Alex Spillius - 08 Dec 2009

America's highest-ranking military officer admitted that US forces were currently losing the war in Afghanistan and said they had 18 to 24 months to turn around the Taliban's momentum.

"This is the most dangerous time I've seen growing up the last four decades in uniform," Adm Mike Mullen told audiences of soldiers and marines, some of whom are weeks away from flying to conflict.

"We are not winning, which means we are losing and as we are losing, the message traffic out there to [insurgency] recruits keeps getting better and better and more keep coming."

<More at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6762317/Adm-Mike-Mullen-US-is-losing-war-in-Afghanistan.html>>

PAK BUSY INCREASING NUKE STOCKPILE

2 Sep 2009 - Economic Times Bureau

NEW DELHI: The Federation of American Scientists, which tracks proliferation issues, has calculated that Pakistan has a stockpile of 70 to 90 nuclear warheads and is busily enhancing its nuclear arsenal and reprocessing facilities. Though Islamabad is yet to reach New Delhi's capabilities, a report co-authored by Hans M Kristensen estimates that in a decade or sooner Pakistan will have at least 100 nuclear warheads and also the missiles to launch these nuclear warheads.

Published in the latest Nuclear Notebook in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, the report said Pakistan is developing its capacities across the board. These include a new nuclear-capable ballistic (Shaheen-II), which is almost ready, two nuclear capable cruise missiles (the ground-launched Barbur and the air-launched Ra-ad), and two new plutonium production reactors and a second chemical separation facility, which are both under construction.

<More at: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/Politics/Nation/Pak-busy-increasing-nuke-stockpile/articleshow/4961541.cms>>

PETRAEUS WARNS OF A LONG AND EXPENSIVE MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

Mark Landler - December 10, 2009

WASHINGTON — America's involvement in Afghanistan could stretch on for years and cost upward of \$10 billion annually just to finance an adequate Afghan security force, the overall commander in the region told Congress on Wednesday.

Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the commander, Gen. David H. Petraeus, one of the military's most influential generals, estimated that building and maintaining a combined army and police force of 400,000 — a size that American commanders believe may eventually be needed to fully secure the country — would cost more than \$10 billion a year. <More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/10/world/asia/10policy.html>>

CAMP LEJEUNE WHISTLE-BLOWER FIRED

Mark Benjamin - Nov. 16, 2009 |

A psychiatrist who tried to prevent Fort Hood-style violence among Marines about to "lose it" instead loses his job

Last April, two Marines at Camp Lejeune predicted to a psychiatrist that some Marine back from war was going to "lose it." Concerned, the psychiatrist asked what that meant. One of the Marines responded, "One of these guys is liable to come back with a loaded weapon and open fire."

They weren't talking about Marines suffering from a tangle of mental and religious angst, like news reports suggest haunted the alleged Fort Hood shooter, Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan. The risk they reported at Camp Lejeune was broader and systemic. Upon returning home, troops suffering mental health problems were getting dumped into an overwhelmed healthcare system that responded ineptly to their crises, the men reported, and they also faced harassment from Marine Corps superiors ignorant of the severity of their problems and disdainful of those who sought psychiatric help.

As Dr. Kernan Manion investigated the two Marines' claims about conditions at the North Carolina military base, the largest Marine base on the East Coast, he found they were true. Manion, a psychiatrist hired last January to treat Marines coming home from war with acute mental problems, warned his superiors of looming trouble at Camp Lejeune in a series of increasingly urgent memos.

But instead of being praised for preventing what might have been another Fort Hood massacre, Manion was fired by the contractor that hired him, Nitelines Kuhana LLC. A spokeswoman for the firm says it let Manion go at the Navy's behest. The Navy declined to comment on this story. <More at: http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2009/11/15/camp_lejeune>

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF VETS RIPPING OFF FELLOW VETS? SHAME!

VETS AGENCY RIPPED FOR RAISES

Barbara Carmen - The Columbus Dispatch - December 6, 2009

The agency that Franklin County (Ohio) military veterans turn to for help has given its executives raises of 66 percent to 80 percent since 2005 -- unbudgeted increases that now are threatening to drain money away from veterans.

Leaders of the Franklin County Veterans Service Commission say the raises are justified. "We're doing an outstanding job," said board member Carl W. Swisher, a Navy veteran who represents the American Legion.

The agency, based at Veterans Memorial, offers emergency help such as subsidies for rent, medical bills and food to military members, veterans and their dependents. Veterans Service officers also help veterans apply for federal, state and local benefits such as disability payments. But hundreds of frustrated veterans are pouring into agencies in neighboring counties for help that should be available at home.

<More at: http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2009/12/06/Copy/vet_commission.ART_ART_12-06-09_A1_14FTFE3.html>

TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
12/15		Ft. Worth, TX	Resource Fair	Triva Watts/Erick Bouie	817-255-7150
12/19		Dallas, TX	Resource Fair	Tammy Wood	214-467-1864

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

IRAQ/AFGHANISTAN DEPLOYMENT TIED TO RESPIRATORY WOES

Reuters - December 3, 2009

CHICAGO – U.S. military personnel deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan face an increased risk for developing respiratory symptoms, including persistent or recurring cough and shortness of breath, a large-scale military study has shown. Combat stress along with air pollution could be to blame, researchers say. The findings stem from the Millennium Cohort Study, an ongoing study designed to investigate long-term health consequences related to military service.

Among nearly 39,000 military personnel free of persistent or recurring cough or shortness of breath at the outset, 14 percent of "deployers" to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq suffered new respiratory symptoms compared with 10 percent of "non-deployers" not assigned to those war zones, the researchers found.

Still, they wrote in the American Journal of Epidemiology, "The current results are reassuring in that no increase in reported asthma, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema was noted in the short term."

According to Dr. Besa Smith from the Department of Defense Center for Deployment Health Research at the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego and colleagues, land-deployed soldiers and Marines were hardest hit by respiratory woes. Deployed Army troops experienced a 73 percent increased likelihood of new respiratory symptoms, while deployed Marines had a 49 percent increased likelihood, whereas no significant associations between deployment and respiratory symptoms were observed among Air Force or Navy/Coast Guard personnel. <More at: <http://news.globaltv.com/world/story.html?id=2299538>>

MORALE DOWN AMONG SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN

Megan Eckstein - Frederick (MD) News-Post - November 19, 2009

Psychological problems of military personnel in Iraq are at their lowest level since 2004, according to an Army report released last week. But morale among soldiers in Afghanistan has dropped significantly over the past two years, an Army news release said.

About 12 percent of soldiers serving in Iraq who were surveyed reported having mental health problems, a figure lower than every year except 2004. But the survey also found soldiers faced much less combat exposure than every year except 2004.

A second study on troops in Afghanistan painted a very different picture. They reported higher combat exposure and lower morale. Morale seems to hit a low point during the last six months of a soldier's tour of duty, and troops in their third or fourth deployment faced significantly more psychological problems than those who had been in combat fewer times.

<More at: http://www.fredericknewspost.com/sections/archives/display_detail.htm?StoryID=104282>

ARMY SUICIDES LIKELY TO SET RECORD THIS YEAR

Nancy A. Youssef - McClatchy Newspapers - November 18, 2009

WASHINGTON — Suicides in the Army are expected to reach a new high this year, with 140 suspected cases among active-duty soldiers so far, Army officials said Tuesday.

This will be the fifth year in a row that grim statistic rose despite an aggressive military campaign to tackle the mental-health stigma in the Army. This year's number already matches that for all of 2008. There were 115 suicides in 2007 and 102 in 2006. More at: http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/nationworld/2010291450_armysuicide18.html>

NEGLECTED WARRIORS

NY Times Editorial - December 3, 2009

Here is a horrifying fact about the human cost of the costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: The suicide rate among active duty soldiers has doubled since 2001. Officials talk of a near epidemic as they warn that the pace of suicides among soldiers and Marines is likely to top last year's tally of 182 active duty members.

The numbers are even worse when suicides of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are included. There's an average of 53 suicides a year among patients at veterans' hospitals, plus an unknown number among the three out of four who never use veterans' services. <More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/03/opinion/03thu3.html>>

SOLDIERS PROJECT HELPS VETS COPE WITH WAR'S MENTAL SCARS

Nicole Santa Cruz - November 28, 2009

The L.A.-based nonprofit provides unlimited, confidential counseling to service members and their families at no charge.

Before he was deployed to Iraq, Scott Shore refused to take aspirin for headaches.

Six years later, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, he takes six medications daily for ailments ranging from depression to insomnia.

"Just to leave my house and take my kids to the park is a struggle," said the 34-year-old Mission Viejo resident, who also receives counseling from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

But another part of Shore's therapy began in January with the Soldiers Project. The Los Angeles-based nonprofit includes a network of mental health professionals who provide free, unlimited, confidential counseling to service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and their families. <More at: latimes.com/news/local/la-me-soldiersproject28-2009nov28.0.1791552.story>

OVER 2,200 VETERANS DIED IN 2008 DUE TO LACK OF HEALTH INSURANCE

Nov. 10, 2009

Harvard researchers say 1.46 million working-age vets lacked health coverage last year, increasing their death rate

A research team at Harvard Medical School estimates 2,266 U.S. military veterans under the age of 65 died last year because they lacked health insurance and thus had reduced access to care. That figure is more than 14 times the number of deaths (155) suffered by U.S. troops in Afghanistan in 2008, and more than twice as many as have died (911 as of Oct. 31) since the war began in 2001.

The researchers, who released their analysis today, pointedly say the health reform legislation pending in the House and Senate will not significantly affect this grim picture. <More at: http://www.pnhp.org/news/2009/november/over_2200_veterans_php>

VETS SHIELDED FROM HEALTH CARE REFORM

Tom Philpott - November 25, 2009

The national health reform bill passed by the House last month and the Senate version to be debated in early December pose no threat to current health care benefits provided to military families, retirees or veterans, say advocates for these beneficiaries as well as congressional committee staffs.

The House-passed Affordable Health Care for America Act ([HR 3962](#)) states in Section 311 that "nothing" in the bill "shall be construed as affecting" authorities used by the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to provide TRICARE programs or VA health care benefits. <More at: <http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,206499,00.html>>

VA OUTSOURCING THREATENS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS

November 30, 2009

(WASHINGTON) - In the midst of the great recession, a depressed job market is hitting veterans particularly hard. Unemployment numbers for all veterans continues to hover near 12 percent, but for service members who left the military in the past three years unemployment is 18 percent, nearly twice the national average.

"The way we treat our veterans when they return home is an indication of our national character," said J. David Cox, AFGE national secretary-treasurer, who was a registered nurse in the VA for over 20 years prior to being elected to the union's executive leadership. "These brave men and women volunteered, served valiantly, and now have to come home to stand in the unemployment line. There is something very wrong with that."

<More at: <http://www.afge.org/Index.cfm?Page=PressReleases&PressReleaseID=1080>>

GARLAND VETERAN WANTS VIETNAM-ERA 'PROJECT 100,000' ENLISTING EXPERIMENT REMEMBERED, NOT REPEATED

Richard Abshire - The Dallas Morning News - November 10, 2009

Jewell Harris of Garland was one of more than 350,000 men drafted despite failing to meet the military's physical or mental requirements as part of a plan called Project 100,000. He fought and was wounded in Vietnam. But in the 35 years since, Harris has been haunted by the notion that Uncle Sam hadn't played straight with him. There was something different about him that others seemed to know, but nobody would tell him what it was.

He was among more than 350,000 men drafted despite failing to meet the military's physical or mental requirements. The plan, created by then-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, was criticized as a ploy to fill Vietnam quotas without the political risks to President Lyndon Johnson of calling up the National Guard and Reserves or canceling college deferments.

The plan was called Project 100,000, in reference to the number of lower-standards men whom McNamara sought to get into the service every year. <More at: <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/city/garland/stories/111009dnmetproject100k.40192bf.html>>

OLD TECHNOLOGY STILL BLOCKS SOME GI BILL PAYMENTS

Tom Philpott - December 03, 2009

Amanda Collier started college last August armed with a certificate of eligibility to use Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits that her dad, a Coast Guardsman of 22 years, had earned and transferred to her.

Next week Amanda will take final exams for her first semester at the University of Central Oklahoma. But neither she nor the university has received any GI Bill money yet to cover her tuition, housing or other costs.

The missing payments "made the semester a lot more complicated than it should have been," said Amanda Wednesday. "Usually the first semester is hardest because you're trying to figure out everything. Having money complications made it a lot more stressful."

Amanda is among an unknown number of Post-9/11 GI Bill users still victimized by computer software at the Department of Veterans Affairs that left VA staff unable to process two categories of claims. These cases simply were set aside to await a software upgrade. Impacted students and schools, it appears, never even got a letter to explain why payments were frozen. <More at: <http://www.military.com/opinion/0,15202,206902,00.html>>

WHEN SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES BECOME EXPENDABLE

Dahr Jamail - truthout Op-Ed - 11 November 2009

The military operates through indoctrination. Soldiers are programmed to develop a mindset that resists any acknowledgment of injury and sickness, be it physical or psychological. As a consequence, tens of thousands of soldiers continue to serve, even being deployed to combat zones like Iraq and/or Afghanistan, despite persistent injuries. According to military records, over [43,000 troops](#) classified as "nondeployable for medical reasons" have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan nevertheless. <More at: <http://www.truthout.org/1111097>>

MILITARY DIVORCE RATE RISES AS WAR STRESS FRAYS MARRIAGES

November 27, 2009

The divorce rate in the armed forces increased slightly again in the last year as military marriages continued to bear the stress of the nation's ninth year at war.

In the 2009 fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, there were an estimated 27,312 divorces among the nearly 765,000 married members of the active-duty Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, according to figures provided by the Pentagon today.

That's a divorce rate of about 3.6% , compared with 3.4% a year earlier. Marriages among reservists failed at a rate of 2.8%, compared with 2.7% the previous year, according to figures from the Defense Manpower Data Center.

... There's no comparable annual system for tracking the national or civilian divorce rate, though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in 2005 that 43% of all first marriages end in divorce within 10 years.

<More at: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/dcnw/2009/11/military-divorce-rate-on-rise-as-war-stress-frays-marriages.html>>

SECRETARY SHINSEKI ANNOUNCES STUDY OF VIETNAM-ERA WOMEN VETERANS

November 18, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching a comprehensive study of women Veterans who served in the military during the Vietnam War to explore the effects of their military service upon their mental and physical health. <More at: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=182>>1

ARMY SENDS MOM TO AFGHANISTAN, INFANT TO PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Dahr Jamail – AlterNet - November 21, 2009

VENTURA, California - U.S. Army Specialist Alexis Hutchinson, a single mother, was threatened with a military court-martial if she did not agree to deploy to Afghanistan, despite having been told she would be granted extra time to find someone to care for her 11-month-old son while she is overseas.

Hutchinson, of Oakland, California, is currently being confined at Hunter Army Airfield near Savannah, Georgia, after being arrested. Her son was placed into a county foster care system.

Hutchinson was threatened with a court martial if she did not agree to deploy to Afghanistan on Sunday, Nov. 15. She has been attempting to find someone to take care of her child, Kamani, while she is deployed overseas, but to no avail.

The military backed off from deploying her on Nov. 15, after enough media attention came to Hutchinson's case. She is still to be deployed, likely immediately after she is able to find someone to care for her infant while she is in Afghanistan.

<More at: <http://www.alternet.org/story/144046/>>

MILITARY CHILDREN FACE MORE CHALLENGES

Dec. 10, 2009

SANTA MONICA, Calif., Dec. 10 (UPI) -- Children from U.S. military families report significantly higher levels of emotional difficulties than children in the general population, researchers said.

Lead author Anita Chandra, a behavioral scientist at the Rand Corp., a non-profit research organization, said older children and girls struggle the most when a parent is deployed overseas.

In 2009, about 2 million U.S. children had a parent in either the active or reserve component of the military, Chandra said.

<More at: http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2009/12/10/Military-children-face-more-challenges/UPI-90781260466085/>

THIS TRAGIC STORY ~ ONE OF OUR MAJOR ISSUES ~ CONTINUES

VETERANS LAND HOME FOR DOGS

Judi McLeod - Canada Free Press - November 18, 2009

The noble dog has proven down through the ages to be man's best friend. Often stripped of his dignity, the War Veteran is man's best chance to live in liberty. In Los Angeles, dogs—given the full run of veteran's property—are living far better lives than some 20,000 local War Veterans.

Canada Free Press (CFP) roving War Veterans reporter Robert L. Rosebrock was out shooting pictures for CFP yesterday, on veterans property in tony LA. "Since 1985, the City of Los Angeles has leased 12 acres of Veterans land for \$1 a year for the Barrington Recreation Center, that includes two baseball diamonds," writes Rosebrock. "In 2003, a section of the property was made into Barrington Dog Park giving area dogs better treatment than thousands of homeless War Vets."

... "When I see all of this first hand, i.e. homeless Veterans sleeping on the outside of their rightful but still inaccessible "home", and dogs running around urinating on Veterans' sacred land, it becomes very infuriating to say the least. "As though having these dogs on veterans property is not insulting enough, they are then taken back home to multi-million dollar film star mansions and pampered with luxuries the rest of us could only wish for." <More at: <http://canadafreepress.com/index.php/article/16992>>

FATCAT PREP SCHOOL USURPS LAND FOR HOMELESS VETS

Gordon Duff - Staff Writer/Senior Editor – 22 Nov 09

How did the Brentwood School, whose tuition rivals Ivy League universities, end up with a billion dollars of land designated for the 20,000 homeless vets of Los Angeles? Simple, a single VA employee turned it over to them. Why would the VA involve itself in such an obvious "reverse Robin Hood" deal, stealing from the poor and giving to the rich?

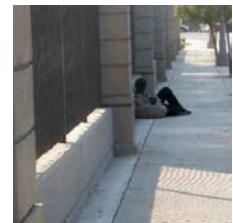
... The Brentwood School is as secretive as Skull and Bones. We know Governor Schwarzenegger's children attend. The alumni and supporter list is unavailable but satellite photos of veterans land no veteran is allowed to walk on, show that the bulk of the West Los Angeles facility deeded for veterans housing and available for development is covered with tennis courts and soccer fields for the children of the rich and famous. <More at:

<http://www.veteranstoday.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=9482>>

GIVES A NEW MEANING TO BEING TREATED LIKE A DOG, DOESN'T IT?



Both pictures – the dog and the homeless vet – were taken at the West LA Veterans Center: The one on the left inside the fence, and the one on the right, outside. [Ed.]



TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF DECEMBER 8, 2009

This week the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps announced an increase in activated reservists, while the Navy and Coast Guard announced a decrease. The net collective result is 3,743 more 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 107,480; Navy Reserve, 6,243; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 14,652; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,807; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 780. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 136,962, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found at <http://www.defense.gov/news/Dec2009/d20091208ngr.pdf>

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,458 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,368
WOUNDED US [12/05/09]	31,582
OTHER US CASUALTIES [12/05/09]	≥45,416
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [12/05/09]	197
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [12/10/09]	≥ 103,187 – 1,339,771
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [11/9/08]	≥ 400K – 1.374M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,987 DAYS)

KILLED US	933
WOUNDED US [12/05/09]	4,640
OTHER CASUALTIES US [12/05/09]	9,459
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [12/05/09]	35
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED COALITION	604
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/4/2009)	≥ 7,589
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$707,253,931,924
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$233,608,217,450

NOTE: SOME NUMBERS DO NOT CHANGE BETWEEN ISSUES BECAUSE UPDATED FIGURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to

<http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

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

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

THE FORGOTTEN COST OF WAR: CARING FOR VETERANS

Paul Rieckhoff - Exec. Director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) - December 1, 2009

President Obama has finally laid out his strategy for Afghanistan. Unfortunately, he did so without using the word "veteran" and without articulating any back-end support for our returning troops. In typical fashion, we've heard the media's talking heads ask: Is Afghanistan Obama's Vietnam? Why only 30,000 troops? Will the exit strategy embolden the Taliban?

And now, the politics and policy of the new strategy have been broken down into predictable soundbite-sized morsels by the partisans and pundits. But few have focused on how the Administration plans to support those 30,000 troops when they return home. Nor have we heard much talk of their families who won't be on planes to Afghanistan, but are still making sacrifices every day on the home front. These are the brave Americans responsible for executing this new plan or waiting for a knock on the door that they pray will never come.

<More at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-rieckhoff/the-forgotten-cost-of-war_b_376304.htm>

VETERANS EAGER TO SERVE ONCE HOME

Audrey Hudson - November 11, 2009

As the nation honors millions of veterans who served their country in numerous wars, those fresh from battle in Iraq and Afghanistan say they are ready for another tour of duty, but this time as a civic engagement in their home communities. The public often hears about rocky transitions for returning veterans, with problems as dramatic as suicide and homelessness. But a poll by Civic Enterprises, a public policy firm, presents a very different picture. The results of the survey, being released Wednesday, show that 90 percent of returning veterans want to continue to serve their communities in some capacity.

"The public perception is that they are damaged in some way when they come back," said John Marshall Bridgeland, chief executive of Civic Enterprises. "They view veterans as already having served their country and think they should be left alone because they have given the ultimate sacrifice, risked their lives, and that their service is done.

"But what this survey shows is that service is embedded in their DNA," Mr. Bridgeland said. "They believe they have a lot to teach, especially to young people."

<More at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/nov/11/veterans-eager-to-continue-service-at-home/>>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

OUTSIDE VIEW: ARMY THROWS MONEY AT MENTAL HEALTH

Lawrence Sellin - UPI Outside View Commentator - Nov. 20, 2009

HELSINKI, Finland, Nov. 20 (UPI) -- The U.S. Army recently funded a five-year, \$50 million study by the National Institute of Mental Health to examine the factors possibly associated with suicide, including combat-related trauma, personal and economic stress, family history, childhood abuse, a military unit's cohesion and general mental health. With all due respect to the eminent scientists at NIMH, I wonder if much of that information is available already from civilian sources, both online and in paper-bound publications. I would doubt that surveying hundreds of thousands of recruits and interviewing soldiers will, in the end, provide that eureka moment they seem to anticipate. Five years seems like a long time to wait for conclusions of which we may already be aware.

There is a humorous aphorism floating around the consulting community, courtesy of despair.com, that if you can't be part of the solution, there is good money to be made prolonging the problem. A five-year study has the added benefit that it will likely outlive the tenure of the Army bureaucrats currently responsible for initiating it.

... The Army's senior officers need to lead from the front, try to get to know their soldiers better and spend enough time with them such that they feel that you know and care about their stresses and difficulties.

The Army's mental-health challenge will be won more quickly and effectively by leadership rather than through cash or complacency.

<More at: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Analysis/2009/11/20/Outside-View-Army-throws-money-at-mental-health/UPI-15981258732800/

DEMOGRAPHICS OF HOMELESS VETERANS

"The Forgotten Americans-Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve" -- released Dec. 8, 1999, by the Interagency Council on the Homeless -- is the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (NSHAPC), which was completed in 1996 and updated three years later. You can visit <http://www.huduser.org/> and download the NSHAPC reports.

Veteran Specific Highlights:

23% of homeless population are veterans
33% of male homeless population are veterans
47% Vietnam Era
17% post-Vietnam
15% pre-Vietnam
67% served three or more years
33% stationed in war zone
25% have used VA Homeless Services
85% completed high school/GED, compared to 56% of non-veterans
89% received Honorable Discharge

79% reside in central cities
16% reside in suburban areas
5% reside in rural areas
76% experience alcohol, drug, or mental health problems
46% white males compared to 34% non-veterans
46% age 45 or older compared to 20% non-veterans

Service needs:
45% help finding job
37% finding housing

How many homeless veterans are there?

Accurate numbers community-by-community are not available. Some communities do annual counts; others do an estimate based on a variety of factors. Contact the closest Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center's Homeless Coordinator or the office of your mayor or other presiding official to get local information.

The Urban Institute, in conjunction with the 1996 National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients (NSHAPC), expressed the following:

2.3 million to 3.5 million people experience homelessness in America each year. By taking 23 percent of that range, that would indicate there are between 529,000 and 840,000 veterans who are homeless at some point during the year.

VETERANS DAY 2009: NOV. 11

CB09-FF.21 Oct. 13, 2009

Veterans Day originated as "Armistice Day" on Nov. 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. Congress passed a resolution in 1926 for an annual observance, and Nov. 11 became a national holiday beginning in 1938. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation in 1954 to change the name to Veterans Day as a way to honor those who served in all American wars. The day honors living military veterans with parades and speeches across the nation. A national ceremony takes place at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Following numbers are as of 2008:

The number of military veterans in the United States 23.2 million

Female veterans	1.8 million
Black veterans	2.3 million
Hispanic veterans	1.1 million
Asian veterans	276,000
American Indian or Alaska Native veterans	160,000
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander veterans	27,000
non-Hispanic white veterans	18.3 million

When They Served

Veterans 65 and older	9.2 million.
Veterans younger than 35.	1.9 million
Vietnam-era veterans (1964-1975)	7.8 million
Gulf War (Aug. 2, 1990, to present)	5.2 million
World War II (1941-1945)	2.6 million
Korean War (1950-1953)	2.8 million
Peacetime	6 million
Vietnam Era and both Gulf War eras	50,000
WW II, the Korean War and the Vietnam Era.	92,000
Both Gulf War eras.	740,000
Korean War and the Vietnam Era.	245,000
World War II and the Korean War.	182,000

Where They Live

Number of states with 1 million or more veterans	5
California	2.1 million
Florida	1.7 million
Texas	1.7 million
New York	1 million
Pennsylvania	1 million

Education

25 and older with at least a bachelor's degree	26%
25 and older with at least a high school diploma	91%.

Income

Annual median income of veterans	\$36,779
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On the Job

Veterans 18 to 64 in the labor force.	10.4 million
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Disabilities

Veterans with any type of disability	5.5 million
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Service-Connected Disability Ratings

Veterans with service-connected disability rating.	3.4 million
Veterans with a rating of 70 percent or higher	588,000

Voting

Number of veterans who voted in the presidential election.	15.8 million
Veterans – 71%	Nonveterans – 63%

Business Owners

Veteran business owners estimated at 3 million of the 20.5 million owners (14.5%)	
Veteran owners who were 55 and older.	68%
All owners who were 55 and older	31 %,
Veteran business owners disabled during military service	7%.

Benefits

Veterans who received compensation for service-connected disabilities	2.9 million
Compensation	\$36.2 billion.
Federal government spending- veterans benefits .	\$84.4 billion
Compensation and pensions,	\$40.2
Medical programs,	\$37.9 billion

Source: http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/pdf/cb09ff-21_veteransday.pdf

THERE WAS NO NEWSLETTER 25 NOVEMBER [#71]
I WAS ON THE ROAD FOR MOST OF THE MONTH.

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 scCook@vuft; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

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

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

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The phone is covered by a voice recorder 24 hours a day. We'll get back to you ASAP.