

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 9

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 DECEMBER 2006

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

WHY NOT A DRAFT?

Colin Powell, GEN USA (Ret), says the [“Army is broken”](#). The Generals want more troops in Iraq with the ability to call up the Guard and Reserves, with no limit on the time that they serve. Congress wants an exit time line AND wants to support the Generals’ request. Enlistments have caught up with the demand with lowered quotas, tripling the number of Category IVs, ignoring the “morality” clause, and increasing the enlistment bonus to a level that would make a Halliburton middle manager smile.

The results are a wounded force, increasingly populated by below average performers and gang members. Gang graffiti is showing up in Baghdad and Kabul, and links have been found between prison-based “Aryan” organizations and military gang members in Europe. As the qualifications are lowered, the failure-to-complete statistic rises, and the discipline problems grow.

Charlie Rangel (D-NY) calls for reviving the draft. [H.R. 4752](#) calls for universal service in either the military or in civilian service. This bill and his two former bills all died in committee. The bill would require all persons 18-42 to not just be eligible for the draft, but also to really serve. Republicans, Democrats, and Libertarians all howl at the thought. But would it be so bad?

We know the current arguments against the draft. It would be a “monumental assault on civil liberties”. It is unnecessary in the age of the all-volunteer force. Mixing amateurs with professionals is an ineffective way to defend America. Too much expense with too little gain – by the time they are trained they go home. The failure rate of draftees will be greater than the current failure rate of volunteers (approximately 20%). Draftees hate their service and make poor soldiers. Providing more soldiers provides more ability to pick fights.

None of these arguments, except perhaps the last one, ring very true to those who have experienced service with draftees. Many of us believe that civil liberties come at the cost of civic responsibility. The all-volunteer force is hurting for membership, and is compromising its quality through its current policies. Mixing amateurs with professionals is the basis for a citizens Army that worked pretty well in WWII; the cadre provide the training and leadership base for the whole force. Basic and AIT for combat soldiers is still 16-24 weeks, leaving 80 weeks more for deployment during a two-year draft. What’s two years anyway? It doesn’t seem to make a difference for the current Guard and Reserve, for whom two years might seem a relief. Draftees historically have as good or better completion rate than regulars, since draftees wanted their two years to go without a hitch so that they could get out and go home on time.

Are there valid arguments for the draft? The volunteer force cannot sustain itself in the face of the current demands. Only the poor and hopeless are volunteering. And the big one - universal service is the shared price of citizenship. Finally, having a draft will make Congress consider their decisions more thoughtfully, because they will actually have a stake in the game.

The first argument is the argument made not only by Gen. Powell, but by many other active and retired officers and noncoms. That only the poor are enlisting is arguable, but much evidence exists that the preponderance of enlistees come from communities with poor employment possibilities. I am biased toward universal service, so I find the argument for it convincing, but not all do. The argument of forcing Congress to have a stake in the game by forcing not only their constituents but also their family members to serve may be the most compelling for all the parties involved.

We cannot force the American public to reincarnate their patriotism from the 1941-45 war. True personal patriotism is an alien concept to many who were born long after that time. Almost no one contributes voluntarily to the welfare of those currently serving, let alone to the “war effort” in general. We also cannot make our decisions about this serious matter based solely on cost, however. “Cost-effectiveness” and “life” are generally incompatible concepts.

And Charlie Rangel’s idea? All of the arguments pro and con notwithstanding, we do know that having a stake in the game makes a real difference. His bill requires all to serve, male and female, with exemptions only for finishing high school. The president decides who and how many serve in the military; all others serve as civilians.

I’d only add one provision that might make the difference for all of the those who argue against it. The bill, once passed, should be placed in suspense, to be activated only when the Congress of the United States, pursuant to its duties under Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, declares war, at which time all 18-42 year-olds would be called up into the various roles provided for in the bill.

That ought to make them stop and think at least about their own children and grandchildren, if not about yours and mine. It certainly would make them think about how they were going to get reelected.

“War, we have come to believe, is a spectator sport. The military and the press ... have turned war into a vast video arcade game. Its very essence- death - is hidden from public view.”

Chris Hedges, New York Times

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.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

BOARD MEETING The new board will be taking up the Strategic Plan for VUFT, Inc. at their next meeting on 27 January 2007 in Santa Barbara. From that strategic planning session we will develop our Operating Plan for 2007-08 and the initial stages of our Program Plans. We are planning to devote our 10 February issue of **SOUND OFF!** to laying out those plans for members.

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

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

If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at rhandy@vuft.org or the Vice Chair at scook@vuft.org. Watch for details at www.vuft.org

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

IF YOU CAN GET THERE, HELP THEM CELEBRATE HER LIFE

The oldest female to get killed in Afghanistan, from what I am told, is SFC Harris of the 364th CA Bde. She is formerly of Alameda. She will have a memorial service on the 29th of December at Fort Mason in San Francisco. Her husband will have a memorial service which will in fact be a celebration as opposed to a mourning. A celebration of her life. She will be cremated. Her husband produces fireworks displays. So - she shall be launched into SF Bay. Soldiers were invited in their BDUs (fatigues for old guys) as opposed to dress uniforms because it will be a casual affair.

The Army has chosen not to support this non-traditional celebration of a soldier's life. They will conduct a wickedly short service which does not support the wishes of the family. Why? - ask me in the morning. How do I know this? The Casualty Assistance Officer works across the hall from me. I told him that if my desire was an Irish Wake and the Army refused to support it, my dear old dad would call our congressman. Maybe even CNN.

John Handy, 1143 Woodside Drive, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

OUTGOING CONGRESS GIVES VETS NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS

December 16, 2006

Outgoing Chairman of the US Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs will go down in history as being the one to author the final piece of comprehensive legislation passed into law by the Republican-controlled Congress. The \$3.2 billion Veterans Benefits bill ([S. 3421](#)) was introduced by Sen. Larry Craig [R-ID], and passed on the last day of the 109th Congress. The new law will allow the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to:

- proceed with major construction projects across the country
- improve mental health care access
- enhance telehealth outreach
- increase assistance to address homelessness
- improve protections for veterans' personal information

- establish an Office of Rural Health
- create a pilot program that makes non-VA facilities – such as private nursing homes or community hospitals – eligible for state veterans' home per diem payments
- reimburse veterans homes run by state governments for costs of care provided to veterans with a 70 percent or higher service-connected disability
- veterans in those homes – veterans with service-connected conditions rated at least 50 percent disabled – will be able to obtain their medications from the VA

<More at: <http://ptsdcombat.blogspot.com/2006/12/outgoing-congress-gives-vets-needed.html>>

THE 109TH CONGRESS IS DEAD. LONG LIVE THE 110TH.

Don't stand on one leg and hold your breath, but just maybe this Congress will get a much longer list of important things done for the serving military and veterans.

RETREAT – NEWS

U.S. PLANS TEST OF MILITARY DRAFT

John Hendren - Dec. 22, 2006

The Selective Service plans to test its operational system in case the United States again opts to draft young American men into military service -- a test laden with meaning as the Bush administration considers increasing the size of the military and a surge of new troops in Iraq. Preparations for the new test, slated for 2009, will begin in June. But Selective Service officials, who have been overwhelmed with telephone inquiries over the news, are quick to say that this test is merely a routine exercise.

"The whole thing's a tempest in a teapot," agency spokesman Dick Flahavan said. "We're not getting ready to spring a draft."

The Bush administration has opposed a draft, with former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld saying the current all-volunteer force is adequate and more effective. But the prospect of a draft has been increasingly controversial as the three-year-old war in Iraq grows progressively more unpopular with the American public. Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson on Thursday told reporters that "society would benefit" under a renewed draft, though he later said he did not support bringing it back.

<More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/story?id=2746094&page=1>>

U.N. ADOPTS TREATY BANNING COUNTRIES FROM SECRETLY ABDUCTING PERCEIVED ENEMIES

Reuters - December 21, 2006

UNITED NATIONS — The General Assembly adopted a treaty Wednesday that would ban nations from abducting perceived enemies and hiding them in secret prisons or killing them. The United Nations received reports of about 535 disappearances last year, many of them in Colombia, Nepal and the breakaway Russian republic of Chechnya.

The treaty has been under negotiation since 1992. The measure was approved by consensus and will come into force 30 days after 20 countries ratify it. The United States, accused of transferring terrorism suspects to secret jails in other countries, did not address the assembly, but rights experts said they did not expect Washington to ratify the pact.

<more at: <http://ai146.insightexpressai.com/adServer/static/12655.html&referrer=N1166.LATimes.com>>

U.S. MILITARY BLURRING EMBASSY MISSIONS ABROAD

Mark Mazzetti - December 20, 2006

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon's efforts to increase the U.S. military presence in embassies abroad and expand operations in nonhostile countries is creating overlapping missions and frictions that could undermine efforts to combat global terrorism, a report by congressional Republicans has found.

The report found that as the Pentagon takes on new roles collecting intelligence, launching information operations and conducting other "self-assigned missions," some embassies had become command posts, with the military personnel in those countries effectively supplanting the role of ambassadors in carrying out American foreign policy.

<More at: www.iht.com/articles/2006/12/19/news/embassy.php>

TUCSON MILITARY RECRUITERS RAN COCAINE

Carol Ann Alaimo - Arizona Daily Star - 17 December 2006

Some kept visiting schools for 3 years after FBI caught them on tape. A Midtown strip mall that should have housed the best of the best served as Corruption Central in Tucson. Two military recruiting stations sit side-by-side there, one run by the Army, the other by the Marines. Between them, a total of seven recruiters were on the take, secretly accepting bribes to transport cocaine, even as most spent their days visiting local high schools.

They had help from several more recruiters at an Army National Guard office, where one recruiter was said to be selling cocaine from the trunk of his recruiting vehicle.

... Some were still recruiting three years after they first were caught on camera running drugs in uniform. Most have pleaded guilty and are to be sentenced in March. Some honorably retired from the military. There is no suggestion in court records that the recruiters were providing drugs to students. <More at: www.azstarnet.com/dailystar/160717>

OFFICIAL IRAQ WAR COSTS DON'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY

By Kevin G. Hall and David Montgomery

McClatchy Newspapers Dec. 05, 2006

WASHINGTON - During a recent visit to a military family center at Fort Hood in Texas, Joyce Raezer was dismayed to find a sign in a stall in the ladies' room. It asked women to clean up because janitorial service had been cut back.

"What message does that send to a family member when they walk into a family center?" asked Raezer, the director of government relations for the National Military Families Association.

At Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, swimming pools closed a month early this fall, and shuttle vans were sharply curtailed in an effort to trim spending. At Fort Sam Houston in Texas, unpaid utility bills exceeded \$4 million, and the base reduced mail delivery to cut costs.

Belt-tightening at the bases is only the beginning. As the United States spends about \$8 billion a month in Iraq, the military is being forced to cut costs in ways big and small. Soldiers preparing to ship to Iraq don't have enough equipment to train on because it's been left in Iraq, where it's most needed. Thousands of tanks and other vehicles sit at repair depots waiting to be fixed because funds are short. At the Red River Army Depot in Texas, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported in October that at least 6,200 Humvees, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, trucks and ambulances were awaiting repair because of insufficient funds. There's a virtual graveyard of tanks and fighting vehicles at the Anniston Army Depot in Alabama. Depot spokeswoman Joan Gustafson said that the depot expects to repair 1,885 tanks and other armored vehicles during the fiscal year that began on Oct. 1. That's up from the 1,169 and 1,035 vehicles repaired in the prior two fiscal years.

... In the first Gulf war, in which 700,000 U.S. soldiers were involved, 44 percent filed for some sort of disability compensation. More than 1.4 million U.S. soldiers have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan since late 2001, and about 26 percent have filed disability claims, according to raw data provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. That percentage could grow as soldiers leave the armed forces. <More at: www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/16171317.htm>

GAO concerns about funding and the global war on terror: www.gao.gov/new.items/d06885t.pdf

Congressional Research Service report on war costs www.fas.org/sqp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf

Military challenges report, Gary Schmitt, American Enterprise Institute

www.aei.org/publications/filter.all.pubID.25097/pub_detail.asp

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
1/28	1000 - 1700	Santa Barbara, CA	VUFT Inc Board Meeting	Bob Handy	805-962-9082
2/8	1000- 1400	San Diego Naval Base San Diego, CA	Job Fair		

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

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

ARMY RELEASES RESULTS OF THIRD SOLDIER MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY

Sgt. Sara Wood, USA - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19, 2006 – Behavioral health care was more readily available to deployed soldiers in 2005 than in previous years, and the stigma with seeking this kind of care is decreasing, according to an Army report released today.

The Department of the Army announced today the results of the third Mental Health Advisory Team, which traveled to Iraq during October and November 2005 to assess the behavioral health requirements of soldiers in theater, and how well medical services are meeting those requirements.

"This study confirmed that the improved (Operation Iraqi Freedom) behavioral health care system is helping soldiers deal with the stress of combat," Army Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, Army surgeon general, said during a media roundtable today.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2468>

REPEAT DUTY TIED TO ACUTE STRESS

A [survey](#) by the Army indicates the mental health of soldiers on return deployment to Iraq has suffered.

By Julian E. Barnes - Times Staff Writer = December 20, 2006

WASHINGTON — American soldiers who serve repeated tours of duty in Iraq are more likely to suffer from acute stress, according to a mental health survey released Tuesday by the Army. Overall, 13.6% of soldiers serving in Iraq reported suffering from acute stress in late 2005, when the survey was taken. Among soldiers serving their first tours, 12.5% reported suffering such stress. But among soldiers on their second tour of duty, the figure jumped to 18.4%.

"There is a sense that the yearlong deployments are challenging, even if morale is good," said Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, the Army's surgeon general. "The normal things — births, first steps, birthdays — those are missed. When soldiers are on second or third tours, my sense is they feel that a bit more."

The adverse effect of multiple, long deployments is a critical factor for military leaders as they consider increasing the number of troops in Iraq. If the White House orders a surge in the force size in an effort to control sectarian violence, the military will probably have to extend the tours of thousands of combat soldiers, keeping them in Iraq longer than a year. In addition, the number of soldiers on their third tour is likely to increase next year, with the return of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-mental20dec20_1_698166.story>

IRAQ'S WOUNDED VETERANS LEARN TO LIVE WITH NEW DISABILITIES

Virginie Montet - Dec 23

Daniel Alderman keeps telling himself it could be worse as he learns to live with his new artificial limb at the hospital in Washington that tends to maimed US soldiers from Iraq.

"It could always be worse, you could be in Arlington, you know what I mean?," he tells a visitor, referring to the national cemetery outside the US capital.

Alderman, 22, whose wife is expecting a baby girl, is one of thousands of soldiers treated at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center near Washington for serious wounds sustained in Iraq.

... Since the start of the Iraq war in March 2003, Walter Reed has treated 5,437 soldiers from "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Other soldiers are treated at the Brooke Army Medical Center in the southern state of Texas. Soldiers amputated below the knees remain at Walter Reed an average six to eight months. Those amputated from above stay for more than a year.

<More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20061223/lf_afp/usiraqmilitary>

VA REACHES OUT TO VETERANS AND SPOUSES "AID AND ATTENDANCE" AN UNDER-USED BENEFIT

WASHINGTON (Dec. 19, 2006) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reaching out to inform wartime veterans and surviving spouses of deceased wartime veterans about an under-used, special monthly pension benefit called Aid and Attendance.

"Veterans have earned this benefit by their service to our nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "We want to ensure that every veteran or surviving spouse who qualifies has the chance to apply."

Although this is not a new program, not everyone is aware of his or her potential eligibility. The Aid and Attendance pension benefit may be available to wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care or who live in nursing-homes or assisted-living facilities.

Many elderly veterans and surviving spouses whose incomes are above the congressionally mandated legal limit for a VA pension may still be eligible for the special monthly Aid and Attendance benefit if they have large medical expenses, including nursing home expenses, for which they do not receive reimbursement. To qualify, claimants must be incapable of self support and in need of regular personal assistance. <More at: www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/opalist_listserv.cfm >

WHY SHOULD IT HAVE TO COME TO THIS?
SUPREME COURT EXPECTED TO HEAR LOCAL VETERAN'S CASE

Bill Dotson - Reporter Crawfordsville (IN) Journal-Review - 12/20/2006

John Vaught hears a shrill, high-pitched ringing in both ears constantly, resulting from his World War II service aboard a Navy destroyer.

"I hear it all the time. It never stops," he said.

Nonetheless, the government has held that veterans like Vaught, 79, Crawfordsville are entitled to compensation for tinnitus in only one ear - but that may be about to change.

After several years of appeals and four or five denials, Vaught's case could go before the Supreme Court of the United States. On Tuesday, Vaught and Loran Rutledge, Montgomery County Veterans Service Officer, detailed the long, arduous process of reaching that point, during a press conference at the Crawfordsville American Legion Byron Cox Post 72.

<More at: www.journalreview.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubSectionID=1&ArticleID=25303&TM=7815.837>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF DECEMBER 20, 2006

This week, the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps announced a decrease, while the Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 1,090 fewer 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 76,720; Navy Reserve, 4,923; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,324; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,436; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 363. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 92,767, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at: www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2006/d20061220ngr.pdf.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE MONDAY 25 DECEMBER 2006

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,972
OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 12/2]	≥46,880
KILLED UK	126
KILLED OTHER COALITION	121
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	741
**KILLED CONTRACTORS	657
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 42,000
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 57,368 [LANCET– 687,713]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+[LANCET- 1,237,883]

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	356
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 9/30]	5,994
KILLED COALITION	219
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	657
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>

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

AFTERTHOUGHTS

A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS POEM

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.
My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
My daughter beside me, angelic in rest.
Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
Transforming the yard to a winter delight.
The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.
My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
So I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
But I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.
Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know, Then the
sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.
My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
And I crept to the door just to see who was near.
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
A lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.
Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.
"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve,
You should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
Away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts.
To the window that danced with a warm fire's light
Then he sighed and he said "Its really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night."

"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line,
That separates you from the darkest of times.
No one had to ask or beg or implore,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before.
My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December,"
Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas 'Gram always
remembers."
My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam',
And now it is my turn and so, here I am.
I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
But my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile.

Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
The red, white, and blue... an American flag.
I can live through the cold and the being alone,
Away from my family, my house and my home.
I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet,
I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.
I can carry the weight of killing another,
Or lay down my life with my sister and brother..
Who stand at the front against any and all,
To ensure for all time that this flag will not fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright,
Your family is waiting and I'll be all right."
"But isn't there something I can do, at the least,
"Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?
It seems all too little for all that you've done,
For being away from your wife and your son."

Then his eye welled a tear that held no regret,
"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.
To fight for our rights back at home while we're gone,
To stand your own watch, no matter how long.
For when we come home, either standing or dead,
To know you remember we fought and we bled.
Is payment enough, and with that we will trust,
That we mattered to you as you mattered to us."

NOTICE

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

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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

ADD-ON – A THOUGHTFUL LOOK AT AN INCREASE IN FORCE STRENGTH

A LARGER MILITARY? WARM BODIES AND DUTY DESCRIPTIONS

Paul Rieckhoff - Dec 2

One of IAVA's most thoughtful members is Ray Kimball, who served in Iraq as an aviation officer for the Army. I offer to you a fantastic piece by Ray discussing all the recent hollow talk of troop numbers and increasing the size of the military. I am sure you find it interesting.

Now that the President has officially gotten behind the idea that we need a larger Army and Marine Corps (and better late than never, I say), it's worth casting some thought to just who and what those extra warm bodies should be.

Nothing sets my teeth on edge more than reading some egghead's report calling for some half-assed troop increase with a nice, round number, and no further detail on exactly what that increase should look like. This only confirms one of Rumsfeld's worst bon mots, "people are fungible." And please don't give me the old chestnut of "we'll let our generals figure out when and where they need the troops" - that's not the way our system works, and hasn't for a long time. The last military officer who had that much autonomy in translating raw numbers into force capabilities was George Marshall, whose like is nowhere to be found today. Any troop increase authorized by Congress is going to have to be specific and detailed - below is my shot at it.

I'll put a warning up front - anyone looking for a huge increase in combat arms capability (infantry, armor, artillery) is going to be sorely disappointed. The fact of the matter is, our current capability in warfighting overmatches anyone else on the planet by a significant margin, and is likely to stay that way. It's not the strain of war that is breaking our military - it's the strain of winning the peace, and while our square peg combat arms can be forced into that round hole, the forces below are far better equipped for it.

My Troop Wish List:

1. An Africa Command (AFRICOM)

We have Unified Commands all over the world, who are responsible for the employment and operations of US forces in that part of the globe. These commands are uniquely tailored to the specific demands of their part of the world - except for Africa, which is currently an added responsibility to the European Command. This makes about as much sense as having the elected US Representatives from Massachusetts pull double duty as voting for the residents of Texas. The staffing should be comparable to PACOM's current setup, with a single staff supplemented by additional support elements. Troops required: 2100.

2. MP Brigades

Every overseas Unified Command (including the Africa Command, above) needs an Military Police (MP) brigade over and above what they've got right now. In our current structure, these are the units best suited for the three-block war currently underway in so many parts of the world. One of many advantages of this unit is that it's designed with decentralized operations in mind, a must for future ops. Yes, I'd love to design the perfect unit, with just the right mix of linguists, vehicles, etc., but the current requirements for building a TO&E are so cumbersome that you'd finally get your units in, oh say, 2030. Exact numbers for this type of unit are not readily available on public domain websites, but 5500 troops seems to be a common estimate. Four of these brigades (one each for PACOM, SOUTHCOM, AFRICOM, and CENTCOM) would therefore need a total of 22,000 soldiers. Yes, I left out EUCOM, largely because any surge of forces needed for that part of the world should come largely from our brethren in NATO, seeing as how it's their backyard.

3. Engineer Brigades

Our current rhetoric talks a lot about "clear, hold and build" - the problem is that, while our trigger-pullers are exceptional at clearing, holding and building are two other things entirely. The MP brigades, above, are intended to be the holders - the engineer brigades are the builders. Or, more specifically, the folks who can partner with host nation capabilities to help them build the infrastructure and capabilities they need for representative institutions to flourish and take root. Again, the strength of this organization is its capability for decentralized operations. Public numbers seem to be somewhere in the vicinity of 9500 soldiers. Again, four brigades translates into a total of 38,000 soldiers.

4. Support Elements

None of the above are self-sustaining or a unit unto their own. Each has specialized equipment and vehicles with unique support and maintenance requirements. Pinning down the exact numbers is problematic - as a rough thumbnail, I'd call it 12,000 soldiers, or roughly 20% above the manning of the units above. These would not be new units, but additions or supplements to units already in place to support those Unified Commands.

5. Permanent Military Transition Teams (MiTT)

Finally, I'd give every Unified Command a permanent MiTT structure, similar to what's operating in Iraq now. Think of this as preventive medicine - these folks could be crucial in training local militaries and police, and helping to prevent problems before they start. Each structure has about 4200 soldiers, so this translates into 16,800 troops.

So, the grand total is 90,900 additional troops---if we're really serious about this Long War. At current costs for salary and benefits, that translates to an additional \$9 Billion per year in personnel costs, to say nothing of the costs of purchasing and maintaining their equipment.

If you disagree with the numbers or the picked units, well, that's to be expected. My larger point is this - anyone (and that includes the President, Senators, Representatives, DoD types and folks in uniform) who just sling around numbers with no thought as to what they represent or how they're going to be implemented should be treated like the mindless dilettantes they are. When talking about troops, numbers just aren't enough. http://news.yahoo.com/s/huffpost/20061221/cm_huffpost/036831