

SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 9

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 DECEMBER 2007

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

“WE CAN’T LEAVE UNTIL WE WIN” ~ PART II

Do you remember the old songs we used to sing in “The Nam”? Lately I particularly remember the Boy Scout song “We’re here, because we’re here, because ... etc.”, and “We’ve gotta get out of this place” by The Animals.

We can’t just tell our soldiers in Iraq that they are “There because they’re there”; that is not fair and makes no sense. Also, I’ve got to think that they want to “get out of [that] place, if it’s the last thing [they] ever do.”

For their sakes, we need a definition of victory that they can live with; it would be nice if we as a nation could live with too.

We have to separate military victory from national victory if we are going to make any sense of this at all. Clearly, military victory is sufficient for the military to come home, while other agencies and associations work to complete “national victory.”

There is a story, probably apocryphal, that President Ford asked for an independent analysis of US involvement in Vietnam post-WWII, that is, from 1945-75. When he was given the report the title was, “US Wins Vietnam War”, but the subtitle was, “War was won in 1964, but subsequently lost in 1965-75”.

Using that logic, President Bush may have been very nearly right, if a bit premature, when he gave his “Mission Accomplished” address on the USS Lincoln. If the objective was to rid the world from the menace of a Hussein with WMD, then the absence of that risk was proven. If the objective, as later stated, was to dethrone Hussein – regime change – then the objective had been reached. All we needed to do militarily was to consolidate, clean up, and come home. If the objective was to establish a democratic Iraq, then with the State Department and the United Nations left to help Iraq get back

on its feet after many years of economic sanctions that was perhaps possible, but not a military objective.

It is the subtitle of the Iraq War that is the problem: it might very well be, “War was won in 2003, but subsequently lost in 2004-2007 and beyond.” But that is not the military’s fault – that does not constitute a military defeat, although it may add up to a national defeat.

The forces’ first mission in 2003 was: “Find and neutralize WMD in Iraq, and neutralize any WMD production and research facilities.” Result: 9 April 2003; MISSION ACCOMPLISHED (or if you’d rather) VICTORY.

The second mission was: “Depose Saddam Hussein and his government, allowing for a new regime in Iraq; find him, arrest him, and turn him over to the sovereign Iraqi government for prosecution.” Result: 14 December 2003; MISSION ACCOMPLISHED – VICTORY.

Unfortunately, since then the mission seems to have been: “Keep on keepin’ on.” Result: 2005-2007; STAGNATION, but not DEFEAT. There has been no appropriate military mission, therefore there has been no defeat.

So now we are faced with the task of redefining the objective to fit the situation. Let’s start with the four original goals for the future of this piece:

1. Stop the loss of US lives as soon as reasonably possible.
2. Stop the loss of Iraqi lives at the hands of US forces.
3. End the occupation by US forces of another sovereign nation.
4. Leave Iraq a chance to stabilize itself through its own efforts, with outside economic and political help.

Add to that a reasonable description of the situation at hand. By the common account, “The U.S. troop buildup has brought down violence, but that has failed to spark cooperation among politicians. If anything, the country appears more balkanized into ethnic and sectarian enclaves.” [LA Times](#) The decrease in violence to Iraqis is reported to be a combination of the Balkanization of all of Iraq into many ethnically “clean” zones (read sectarian turf), and a lack of legitimate reporting on violence occurring daily throughout the country as the Iraq war fades from the news. The general atmosphere in the countryside and in most of the cities seems to be small-to-large turf wars among the various factions, much like the Italian Mafia families with the Sicilians or Cosa Nostra (Shia), the Calibrians or ‘Ndrangheta (Sunni), the Camorra (Kurds), and the Sacra Corona Unita (Uzbeks and others). US Forces do not belong in the middle of such a fight, and have no acceptable mission there.

The military and governmental situation is that the Maliki government, strongly influenced by Iran and strongly pro-Shia, is making the occupying forces’ policy decisions; this is unacceptable to any American. We ought to remember this situation from the Vietnam War when local ARVN military commanders and province chiefs forced us to withhold missions and fires because their friends and relatives in the Cong and the PAVN were in the area. The Sunni militias are running their turf and we are paying [bribing] them to support us, a situation that will last only as long as the bribes last.

What should we do?

After almost five years of war we ought to say officially, “We’ve gotta get out of this place.” We need to say that our military goals have been met and then some. We cannot provide security by pretending that dealing with a central government without influence is the solution. We cannot continue to fight where the our tactical security decisions are being made by local tribal leaders and private militia bosses. Most of all, we can no longer be involved in a religious war where the multiple combatants care only for their own power and the supremacy of their ideology. In short, we cannot make a nation when the local leaders don’t really want one.

Thus we propose a new military objective which includes the premise that there will be no permanent stationing of forces in Iraq.

First objective – Disengage and move into secure enclaves. There is no need to continue losing allied lives, and there is no positive result by continuing to provide neighborhood security through search and destroy missions which at the least enrage, and sometimes destroy the neighborhoods we are

trying to secure. After five years this job has to be turned over to the Iraqi police and military, regardless of their willingness, and regardless of their views on democracy, justice, due process, or religion.

Second objective – Provide national not neighborhood security by establishing the enclaves toward the borders of Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran and committing to 6-12 months of providing border security.

Third objective – Withdraw after one year at the most, and regardless of the internal situation at the time. We cannot build a nation by beating the Iraqis into submission, and we don’t have the forces to do it if we could. We cannot continue to operate in an environment where critical policy decisions are made by any chief or bandit who wishes, when those decisions profoundly affect our forces. Withdrawal should be accomplished in the best military manner, with troop security the paramount consideration.

At the end of this editorial is their new “five-paragraph field order”

What then of Iraq? Don’t we have an obligation to them after all this time? Well yes we do, but it is not a military obligation. We ought to be firing up to aid reconstruction, to the extent that the Iraqis themselves can provide security to their reconstruction efforts. Those efforts should be international, involving our world partnerships, and not just the US alone. The bulk of the funding will have to come from us, and rightly since we have done most of the damage, but it should be in the form of grants, and should not involve US contractors unless the Iraqis request them.

But won’t the money be misused? Well yes, by our definition, but our definitions don’t always work. If you have ever worked in the Middle East, as I have, you know that an American’s “bribe” is a Middle Easterners “commission” or “fee for services”. That’s the way they do things, whether we approve or not. Guess what? They don’t understand or approve of our view either.

So by giving grants, we don’t have to worry about the “Foreign Corrupt Practices Act” except when US contractors are involved. We can continue to fund them at the rate we have been pouring money into the war for another two years or so, and then pull the plug. After that, it’s all their show.

Finally, when the troops come home, honor them for **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED – VICTORY!**

As for the future, try reading ["Restoring American Military Power: Toward a New Progressive Defense Strategy for America"](#), by Lawrence Korb and Max Bergmann. [Ed.]

1. SITUATION

a. Enemy Forces

- 1) Rogue sectarian elements within the organized armed forces and the police.
- 2) The semi-organized forces of the sectarian and tribal militias.
- 3) Irregular elements, either anti-occupation or bandits, from sources both internal and external to Iraq

b. Friendly Forces

- 1) Approximately 160,000 US forces in-country.
- 2) Support forces in Kuwait, Qatar and other friendly Gulf nations
- 3) Out-of-country air and naval resources

c. Attachments and Detachments

- 1) A few allied forces from coalition partners, quickly diminishing in numbers.
- 2) State department civil government experts (require force protection)
- 3) Contractors, both armed and unarmed support.

d. Assumptions

- 1) The US military force will not be directly involved in nation-building operations
- 2) The US military force will not establish a long-term presence in Iraq
- 3) The Iraqi military and police forces will cooperate with the residual training mission.

2. MISSION

Consolidate the US position along the borders of Iraq to provide border security for a limited time (one year – to a maximum of 18 months). Conduct an orderly withdrawal from Iraq that is completed by the end of the 12-18 month period.

Success of the military mission will be determined by the success of withdrawal, not by any condition of the Iraqi government and its institutions.

3. EXECUTION

a. Concept of Operation

- 1) The rules of engagement include only self-defense/force protection
- 2) Withdraw to temporary positions and installations along the borders of Iraq and provide border security
- 3) Dismiss all armed contractors immediately
- 4) Establish training camps for police and regular military forces: conduct training for their training cadre for a maximum of one year
- 5) Dismantle or transfer all permanent, semi-permanent and temporary bases to the Iraq government
- 6) Gradually withdraw from Iraq after one year, maximum 18 months for withdrawal of all US forces. Priority of withdrawal to National Guard and Reserve elements and individuals.
- 7) During all actions, minimize, and if possible eliminate the chance of Iraqi casualties at the hand of American forces

b. Coordinating Instructions

- 1) Provide force protection for US non-military personnel who are assisting the Iraqi government
- 2) Provide logistic support to US agencies, and where possible, to NGOs assisting the Iraqi government

4. SERVICE SUPPORT

a. Materiel and Services

Draw down all contractor material and service support at a rate comparable to the withdrawal tempo

5. COMMAND AND SIGNAL

TBD

AUTHENTICATED BY: A GRATEFUL NATION

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program <http://www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm>. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar <http://www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/>

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. We have revised it and are regularly adding useful references.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

THE FIGHT IS ON! The [law suit](#) that we have filed along with Veterans for Common Sense against the Veterans’ Administration proceeds slowly. There are new [documents](#) on the lawsuit concerning disclosures on our website.

On December 14, 2007, at 10:00 AM, Senior Judge Samuel Conti, U.S. District Court for Northern California, heard oral arguments about VA’s motion to dismiss the law suit. Our advocates gave a spirited defense of our position. The judge has promised to rule by 22 February 2008..

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

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS meeting for December has been postponed; the board will be meeting in January. Details in the next issue.

WE NEED YOUR HELP. VUFT is a no-fee organization. We must raise money to keep the effort going. Normal expenses have been borne out of the pockets of a very few board members, plus a few small donations over the two plus years of our existence. Although our legal defense in the current case is *pro bono*, we expect to incur expenses in support of the case, to include travel expenses should we need to testify. We also are incurring expenses in our effort to expand to all fifty states. Please consider [donating](#) whatever you can to VUFT ~ all donations are tax deductible to the donor.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

No letters this issue

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

[H.R. 4253](#): Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007: To improve and expand small business assistance programs for veterans of the armed forces and military reservists, and for other purposes. Dec 6, 2007: passed in the House of Representatives. 407 Ayes, 2 Nays, 22 Present/Not Voting. Dec 19, 2007: passed in the Senate by Unanimous Consent.

[H.R. 3793](#): Veterans Guaranteed Bonus Act of 2007: To amend title 37, United States Code, to require the continued payment to a member of the uniformed services who dies or is retired or separated under chapter 61 of title 10, United States Code, bonuses and similar benefits that the member was entitled to before the death, retirement, or separation of the member and would be paid if the member had not died, retired, or separated, to prohibit requiring the member to repay any portion of the bonuses or similar benefits previously paid, and for other purposes. Dec 18, 2007: passed in the House of Representatives. 405 Ayes, 0 Nays, 27 Present/Not Voting.

[S. 2400](#): Wounded Warrior Bonus Equity Act: A bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Defense to continue to pay to a member of the Armed Forces who is retired or separated from the Armed Forces due to a combat-related injury certain bonuses that the member was entitled to before the retirement or separation and would continue to be entitled to if the member was not retired or separated, and for other purposes. Dec 14, 2007: passed in the Senate by Unanimous Consent.

[S. 793](#): Reauthorization of the Traumatic Brain Injury Act: A bill to provide for the expansion and improvement of traumatic brain injury programs. Dec 11, 2007: passed in the Senate by Unanimous Consent.

[H.R. 1418: Reauthorization of the Traumatic Brain Injury Act](#) (Status: Introduced)

NEW DEFENSE BILL PROHIBITS GANG MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a criminal street gang must be included on the list of prohibited activities for service members, according to a provision in the 2008 defense authorization bill. The provision directs the defense secretary to revise one of the department's directives to disallow gang membership. <More at: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2007/12/army_gangmembership_071210w/>

RETREAT – NEWS

U.S. MILITARY STEPS UP WAR-ZONE AIRSTRIKES

Jim Michaels - USA TODAY

The U.S. military has increased airstrikes in Iraq four-fold this year, reflecting a steep escalation in combat operations aimed at al-Qaeda and other militants. Coalition forces launched 1,140 airstrikes in the first nine months of this year compared with 229 in all of last year, according to military statistics.

Airstrikes are up in Afghanistan, too. Coalition planes have made 2,764 bombing runs this year, up from 1,770 last year. The figures don't include strikes by helicopter gunships. <More at: www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-10-21-airstrikes_N.htm>

'GOD'S BASIC TRAINING' COMING UNDER FIRE

Bryant Jordan - December 19, 2007

The warriors pose for the camera in a group shot - some holding their weapons in one hand and their holy book in another. Elsewhere, a poster bears a quotation calling for the killing of enemy leaders and forcing the defeated people to convert.

If you think the images come from Islamic fundamentalist training camps in remote regions of the Middle East you'd be wrong.

The photo depicts Army trainees at Fort Jackson, S.C., where in addition to basic combat training recruits may also attend "God's Basic Training," while the poster -- boasting a quotation from conservative author Ann Coulter -- adorns the door of a Military Police office at Fort Riley, Kansas. ... The "God's Basic Training" program is part of the military ministry backed by Campus Crusade for Christ. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,158531,00.html>

BRITISH HAND OVER BASRA IN DISARRAY

Sam Dagher - Correspondent and Abdul-Karim al-Samer - Contributor – CS Monitor - December 17, 2007

BAGHDAD AND BASRA, IRAQ Nine of 18 provinces are now under Iraqi security forces. But central and southern Iraq face a vicious power struggle between Shiite parties and militias. A largely symbolic ceremony was held in Basra Sunday marking the transfer of security in the province to Iraqis from British forces, who had previously withdrawn from the city in September.

The event shines the spotlight on the willingness - and ability - of the central government and the Iraqi Army to exert their authority over Iraq's most strategic and resource-rich city, which is now in the grips of feuding militias. Some of those militias are beholden to Iran, or are criminal gangs and religious fundamentalists who have stepped up in recent weeks their campaign of killings against women, minorities, and secular figures. Just last week, a Christian brother and sister were shot on a Basra street by gunmen posing as police.

The Basra hand-off to Iraqi forces (they can still call on multinational forces for help), would be the sixth and most significant so far among the nine predominantly Shiite provinces of central and southern Iraq. Counting the three Kurdish provinces, Iraqi forces are now in charge of nine of 18 provinces. <More at: www.csmonitor.com/2007/1217/p06s01-woiq.html>

ARMY RAISES INCENTIVE ROOF

December 17, 2007

Officials of the Army entice new recruits with higher sign-on bonuses, as they double the amount for those who enlist for two or three years. Julia Bobick, spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Recruiting Command in Fort Knox, Ky., says that raising the bonus amount is not an indication of desperation among recruiters but a desire to appeal to those who may want shorter enlistment options. The Army occasionally reviews its incentive options and looks to keep up to date with what recruits are asking for and expect.

Before the Army boosted the maximum bonus ceiling, the highest amount a recruit could receive for most jobs in a three-year enlistment was \$10,000 or \$20,000 for high-demand, undermanned positions. The bonuses have now gone from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for all recruits signing on for three years. The Army has also raised the two-year enlistment bonus for more than 45 jobs from \$6,000 to \$15,000. The two-year enlistment terms include training, however, all of the enlistment bonuses are cumulative. Upon graduation from basic training, the Army will pay recruits up to \$10,000, with any additional remainder of the bonus being paid in annual installments. --Erin Murphy ~ <http://veterans.xksandiego.com/>

ARMY WANTS BETTER DETENTION PRACTICES

Associated Press - December 15, 2007

FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan. - Tom Schmitt displays photos from Abu Ghraib and winces. The former military police officer is mortified that detainees at the Iraq prison were dragged on leashes and stacked nude in a pyramid. The Army takes those mistakes very seriously, Schmitt recently told 45 military police captains. While Soldiers and officers may have been experienced in police tactics, he said, they lacked the skills to handle situations beyond their military training.

The Army has since reshuffled its operations, putting more Soldiers with experience in military prisons in contact with detainees. It instructs Soldiers to treat detainees with dignity and tries to teach them skills to avoid situations that could violate detainee rights.

"I want to keep it on a humane level, because there's less likely to be another Abu Ghraib," Schmitt said.

<More at: www.wjla.com/news/stories/1207/480830.html>

FEAR HALTS ANONYMOUS GREETING CARDS FOR TROOPS

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama (AP) -- Hundreds of thousands of holiday cards and letters thanking wounded American troops for their sacrifice and wishing them well never reach their destination. They are returned to sender or thrown away unopened.

Since the September 11 attacks and the anthrax scare, the Pentagon and the Postal Service have refused to deliver mail addressed simply to "Any Wounded Soldier" for fear terrorists or opponents of the war might send toxic substances or demoralizing messages. Mail must be addressed to a specific member of the armed forces -- a rule that pains some well-meaning Americans this Christmas season. <More at: www.cnn.com/2007/US/12/11/troops.mail.ban.ap/>

TWO MORE "SUPPORT THE TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES" CASES

WIDOWS LOSE CASE IN FAKE VA STUDIES

Knight Ridder - December 12, 2007

ALBANY -- A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed against the Department of Veterans Affairs by the widows of five veterans who died after being enrolled in corrupt drug experiments at Stratton VA Medical Center. In dismissing the case at the request of federal attorneys, U.S. District Court Senior Judge Thomas J. McAvoy cited the fact there is no proof the veterans, all of whom were terminally ill cancer patients, had died prematurely or endured added pain and suffering as a result of being fraudulently enrolled in studies designed to test drugs for marketability. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,158041,00.html>

THREE ARRESTED IN LOUDON FOR STEALING VETERANS BENEFITS

Posted: 12:06 PM Dec 19, 2007

Loudon (WVLT) -- Three people have been arrested in Loudon County [TN] for stealing Veteran's benefits. Ronnie Costner, 68 and Lynn Costner, 57 of Clinton are the former owners of the Mountain View Assisted Living Facility.

According to the TBI, the pair has been under investigation since 2003 when complaints were filed about abuse of patient funds.

<More at: www.volunteertv.com/home/headlines/12629136.html>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
2008		See Next issue			

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 TIMES: EDITORIAL: LONG ROAD LOOMS FOR VA

The huge backlog of veterans' benefits claims, now 400,000 and growing, is hardly a secret. Less well known, however, is the other side of this problem — the appeals process that kicks in when veterans challenge initial decisions on their claims.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims has the highest caseload of any federal appeals court. In fiscal 2007, it received 4,644 cases and decided 4,877 — both all-time records for a court that boasts just seven judges.

Given the complexity of disability claims and the often murky details, especially with mental health claims, this astonishing caseload makes it hard to believe veterans get a fair hearing on their appeals. Worse, the appeals backlog is at 6,300 and counting, which is why it takes an average of two years, and often longer, for a decision.

Chief Judge William Greene Jr. has asked Congress to approve the hiring of more support staff, and to allow decisions to be made using condensed records rather than more extensive documents that can take months to gather. A bill to add two more judges to the court is also pending.

But there is little apparent urgency to deal with the matter. The bill to add more judges, for example, is mired in the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. The odds are that things will get worse before they get better. After years of delay, the VA is finally hiring more claims processors — which will speed initial decisions and likely appeals, as well.

Having browbeaten VA to hire more claims processors, Congress must swallow its own medicine and add more judges and staff to the appeals court. The backlog is too long, and the time judges have to render a fair decision is too short for justice to be served to our wounded veterans.

PLEASE CLICK THROUGH AND READ THIS ENTIRE ARTICLE

NOT US. WE'RE NOT GOING!

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Dec 8, 2007

Soldiers in 2nd Platoon, Charlie 1-26 stage a 'mutiny' that pulls the unit apart

... Alpha Company's first sergeant, was known as a family man and as a good leader because he was intelligent and could explain things well. But Staff Sgt. Jeremy Rausch of Charlie Company's 1st Platoon, a good friend of McKinney's, said McKinney told him he felt he was letting his men down in Adhamiya.

"First Sergeant McKinney was kind of a perfectionist and this was bothering him very much," Rausch said. On July 11, McKinney was ordered to lead his men on a foot patrol to clear the roads of IEDs. Everyone at Apache heard the call come in from Adhamiya, where Alpha Company had picked up the same streets Charlie had left. Charlie's 1st Platoon had also remained behind, and Rausch said he would never forget the fear he heard in McKinney's driver's voice:

"This is Apache seven delta," McKinney's driver said in a panicked voice over the radio. "Apache seven just shot himself. He just shot himself. Apache seven shot himself."

Rausch said there was no misunderstanding what had happened. According to Charlie Company soldiers, McKinney said, "I can't take it anymore," and fired a round. Then he pointed his M4 under his chin and killed himself in front of three of his men. <Full article at: www.armytimes.com/news/2007/12/bloodbrothers3/>

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF TASK FORCE ON THE FUTURE OF MILITARY HEALTHCARE RELEASED

December 20, 2007

Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England today received the findings and recommendations from the 14-member task force on the future of military healthcare.

The overview of recommendations was provided by the task force co-chairs, Gen. John Corley and Gail Wilensky. They included:

- Better integration of purchased care and direct care at the point of delivery of healthcare
- Independent examination of financial controls to ensure healthcare for those eligible and to ensure that Tricare operates, as legally required, as a second payer when there is other health insurance
- Ways to improve wellness, preventive care, and disease management programs, and to measure the effectiveness of those programs, emphasizing the need for more coordination, leadership, and outreach outside of the department
- Recommendations for streamlining procurement systems and more effective contracting
- Continued attention on medical readiness of the Reserve component and close attention to the implementation and effectiveness of Tricare Reserve Select
- Restructuring of the cost-sharing structure for retirees and their families (not active duty and families), e.g., changes to enrollment fees, deductibles, co-payments, indexing, etc.), including the pharmacy benefit program, including a modest fee for the Tricare for Life program.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year of 2007, Public Law 109-364, Sec. 711., established the group and tasked it to provide an assessment of and recommendations for sustaining the military health care services being provided to members of the armed forces, retirees, and their families.

More information on the task force and a copy of the final report are available on its Web site at: www.dodfuturehealthcare.net/.

This article at: www.defenseink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=11577

CERTAIN PAYMENTS TO DISABLED VETERANS RULED TAX-FREE; SOME MAY BE DUE REFUNDS

IR-2007-198, Dec. 12, 2007

WASHINGTON — Payments under the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program are no longer taxable and disabled veterans who paid tax on these benefits in the past three years can now claim refunds, the Internal Revenue Service said today.

Recipients of CWT payments will no longer receive a Form 1099 from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Disabled veterans who paid tax on these benefits in tax-years 2004, 2005 or 2006 can claim a refund by filing an amended return using IRS Form 1040X. According to the VA, more than 19,000 veterans received CWT in Fiscal Year 2007.

<More at: www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=176442,00.html>

NO MORE HASSLE IN CITIZEN SOLDIER PAY

Military.com | By Bryant Jordan | December 09, 2007

Decades of pay hassles if not downright nightmares for Army Reserve and Army National Guard troops called to active duty and deployed should come to an end next year when the Army at last launches its new payroll system. When the Defense Integrated Human Resources System goes live on Oct. 1, 2008, all pay will go through the one system, thereby avoiding steps where snafus can occur, according to Army Col. Patrick Devine, [DIMHRS](#) program director and the Army's representative to the Defense Department system. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,157849,00.html>

STUDY LINKS GULF WAR SERVICE WITH LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE

Dec 9, 2007

Veterans who served in the Persian Gulf in 1990 and 1991 have a nearly twofold risk of Lou Gehrig's disease compared to veterans of the same era who did not serve in the Gulf, according to research funded by VA and the Department of Defense.

Lou Gehrig's disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), is a progressive neurodegenerative disease. Experts don't know what causes the disease, but they say it can take 10 years or longer to develop.

This study, published in *Neurology*, was the first to track Gulf veterans for at least a decade and the first to include all military personnel on active duty during the war—regardless of whether they were deployed to the Gulf. Based on preliminary findings

released in 2001, VA announced it would provide benefits to Gulf War veterans who subsequently develop ALS.
 <More at: <http://boards.historychannel.com/thread.jspa?forumID=2174&threadID=800033614>>

WE TOLD THIS STORY SEVERAL ISSUES AGO – NOW THE WASH POST IS ON IT

STUDY FAULTS CHARITIES FOR VETERANS

Philip Rucker - Washington Post Staff Writer - December 13, 2007; A01

Some Nonprofits Shortchange Troops, Watchdog Group Says

Americans gave millions of dollars in the past year to veterans charities designed to help troops wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, but several of the groups spent relatively little money on the wounded, according to a leading watchdog organization and federal tax filings. Eight veterans charities, including some of the nation's largest, gave less than a third of the money raised to the causes they champion, far below the recommended standard, the American Institute of Philanthropy says in a report. One group passed along 1 cent for every dollar raised, the report says. Another paid its founder and his wife a combined \$540,000 in compensation and benefits last year, a Washington Post analysis of tax filings showed.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/12/AR2007121202657.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF DECEMBER 19, 2007

This week the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps announced a decrease, while the Army and Coast Guard announced an increase. The net collective result is 2,333 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. The total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 74,321; Navy Reserve, 5,170; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 6,260; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,379; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 357. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been mobilized to 94,487, 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/Dec2007/d20071219ngr.pdf>.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 9 DECEMBER 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,886
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 10/1]	28,451
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 10/1]	≥29,584
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 10/1]	130
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	4
KILLED UK	173
KILLED OTHER COALITION	133
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	1,001
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 85,072 [LANCET-1,129,698]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+ [LANCET- 1,414,723]
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [9/15]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US (10/24/2007)	469
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 10/2007]	7,720
KILLED COALITION (6/2007)	278
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (11/3/2007)	1,472
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE [12/9]	\$475,643,069,248

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

QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE MILITARY

[Center for American Progress]

Hundreds of thousands of brave men and women in our armed forces have endured multiple lengthy deployments in war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001. Unfortunately, the Bush administration has not adequately reciprocated service members' resolve and commitment to our country.

It is not surprising that only 29 percent of active duty troops, veterans, and their families believe the Bush administration is doing a good job handling their needs. Returning veterans have confronted a litany of obstacles that have negatively affected their quality of life.

Here is a snapshot of our findings:

Finances

Troops are battling financial burdens before, during, and after deployments.

- The president rejected the House Armed Services Committee's proposal to increase military pay by 3.5 percent.
- The administration blocked an effort to increase combat pay and family separation pay for deployed troops.
- The administration has ordered at least 1,300 battle-wounded soldiers and deceased soldiers' families to repay their service bonuses.
- Thousands of injured soldiers have been harassed by collections agents, suffered bad credit reports, and foresee future income tax hassles.
- The VA has already located over 1,500 homeless Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.
- One in every four homeless persons is a veteran.

Medical Care

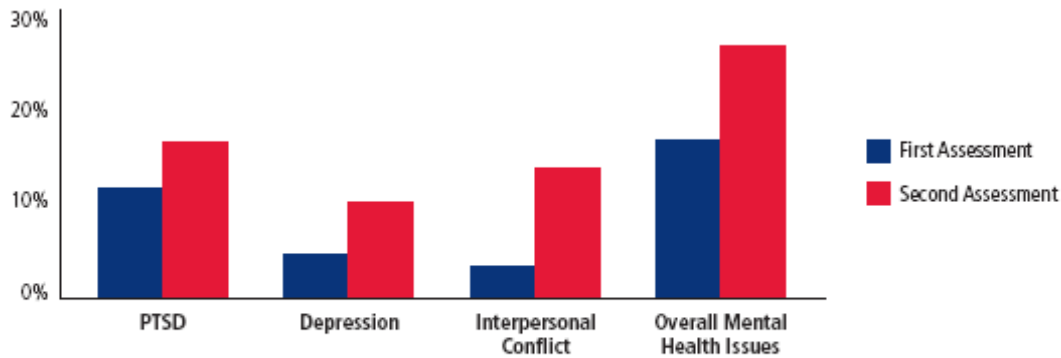
Military health care is one of the most visible signs of the Bush administration's neglect and incompetence.

- Patients, until recently, have grossly outnumbered Army primary care managers by 1200 to 1 in some major facilities. Current ratios are near 200 to 1.
- The typical soldier is required to file 22 documents with eight different commands to enter and exit the VA's medical process.
- The Army's three personnel databases are unable to read the other's files, creating crippling bureaucratic roadblocks.

Mental Health

Prolonged and repeated tours overseas have pushed mental health to the forefront of military concern.

- One in five troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan now show signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Up to 30 percent of troops deployed to Iraq suffer from PTSD, depression, or anxiety.
- Army surveys have revealed that soldiers with repeated deployments are 50 percent more likely to suffer from PTSD.
- Army studies conclude that frequency and length of time in a combat zone are the determining factors of a service member's mental health status.
- Symptoms of mental illness take time to appear:



Source: Charles S. Milliken, MD; Jennifer L. Auchterlorie, MS; Charles W. Hoge, MD, "Longitudinal Assessment of Mental Health Problems Among Active and Reserve Component Soldiers Returning From the Iraq War," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 298 (18) (2007): 2141–2148.

Suicide

- 2006 saw the highest suicide rate in the Army in 26 years.
- The Army's suicide rate has nearly doubled since 2001.
- Fifty-five percent of suicide cases last year involved soldiers who were serving or had served at some point over the preceding five years in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Family Life

Multiple tours and extended deployments have wreaked havoc on the personal lives of those in uniform and their families.

- The current 15-month tours in Iraq and Afghanistan are the longest combat tours for the Army since World War II.
- Thirteen of the active Army's 43 brigades are serving their third tour in either Iraq or Afghanistan, and five brigades are serving their fourth tour since 2001.
- The administration's stop-loss policy has already affected some 70,000 enlisted soldiers.
- Divorce rates in the military nearly doubled between 2001 and 2004, and rose steadily afterward.
- Forty-two percent of service members said they felt like "a guest in their own home."
- Army surveys find that family problems and PTSD reinforce each other.

For source information, please visit www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/12/military.html

ADD-ON ~ TRIVIA??

WHAT MILLIONS OF AMERICAN MEN DID

Just under 27 million American men were eligible for military service between 1964 and 1973. Of that number 8.4 million served on active duty [31% of the eligible]

Another 2 million served in the National Guard or military reserve. [7.4%] of the eligible]

About 15.4 million got deferments, most for education, a smaller number for physical, mental or family hardship [57% of the eligible].

2.1 million actually saw service in Vietnam [25% of the active duty Military; 7.77% of the eligible].

570,000 illegally resisted the draft [2.1% of the eligible]

58,152 were killed [2.77% of those who served in Vietnam; 0.069% of the active duty military]. 153,303 were seriously wounded [7.3% of those who served in Vietnam; 0.18% of the active duty military]

Sources: National Archives, Reader's Companion to American History

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