

SOUND OFF!



VOL. V, NO 10

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 JANUARY 2010

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

MYTH? ~ FACT? ~ WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE? ~ WHO CARES?

America and the American spirit are fueled by myths. We have heard them all for so long that we seem to be unable to differentiate between myth and fact any more.

We build these myths because we confuse unintended or reinterpreted results with original intent. We also build them because we don’t like the facts, so we develop a myth that marginally accommodates the facts but hides the real reasons for whatever action was taken or policy was established in our name.

Some fairly obvious examples:

1. *The Civil War was fought to end slavery.* No question that that was a major result, but it certainly wasn’t the original intent. But abolition sounds a lot better than “states’ rights”, “economic jealousy”, or “ultra-conservative sectionalism”.
2. *Heroic frontiersmen conquered the Golden West.* Yes they did, heroic or not, and that sounds a lot better than “murdered native Americans and stole their land”.
3. *The US Constitution established a democratic republic.* That also sounds better than “protected the property rights of a moneyed elite from both the British crown and the common American.”

Some less obvious examples:

4. *Legislators represent their constituents.* Hard to believe when, according to public opinion polls 80% support raising the minimum wage; 70% support *habeas corpus* rights for Guantanamo detainees; 64% support national health insurance coverage by the government; 73% favor abolishing nuclear weapons; and

81% oppose torture and favor adherence to the Geneva conventions.

5. *Journalists – the “4th Estate” – are the unbiased check on government and corporations.* Ask Rupert Murdoch or any other of the few remaining “journalistic” corporations still standing.
6. *Americans have protected free speech.* Often only in “free speech zones”; never “free” if that speech is to get to any broader audience than those who read your blogs or tweets. Corporations, however, have the cash and the protection in American law to get their “free speech” out even (or especially) when they oppose the wishes of the American public.
7. *Americans have “Government of the people, by the people.”* When was the last time you felt that the government – all three branches – was doing what you wanted it to, regardless of your basic political ideology.

So are there myths that apply specifically to veterans?

There are, and most of them are obvious:

1. *Americans believe in common sacrifice.* I guess this is true if you say that they believe in **your** sacrifice, but not theirs.
2. *Americans are grateful for the sacrifice of veterans.* Here again, they are apparently grateful only to the extent that you made the sacrifice and not them. If you don’t believe it, just listen to their Veterans’ Day speeches.
3. *If you serve your country, your country will repay that service with medical care and other support for as long as you need it.* Well this

could be true for some who got in the system early, but it certainly isn't true for many today.

4. *The Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to the mission as expressed by President Lincoln, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan".* Most of us can affirm that the VA's policy of **"Deny 'til they Die"** doesn't quite fit this myth. Lincoln meant it, but I doubt the VA does.
5. *Americans are generous to those in need.* Now this one is partially true. The current effort in Haiti illustrates when it is true as did the American response to the Indonesian tsunami. Unfortunately it only seems that this holds for natural disasters. Why not such a response for Rwanda, or Srebrenica, or other places where we conveniently forgot our Nuremberg pledge "Never again!". For that matter, how about the tens of thousands of US veterans who are sleeping on the street? Why are we being generous to the wealthy by giving them VA land in LA and elsewhere, and not being generous to those who served us? Maybe the truth is that except for natural disasters we are most generous to those who already have it all.

The worst part of all of this is, of course, that if one has the temerity to point these discrepancies out, then that person is supposed to be "anti-American". Not just "un-" but "anti-".

I guess that qualifies me as anti-American in the eyes of those who would perpetuate the myths instead of facing up to the truth.

But telling the truth, if another myth is to be believed, is totally American. We are supposed to be tough. We are supposed to be able to "take it".

Of course if that myth is true, then why have we been cowering in fear ever since 9/11/2001? That's what our representatives and our media pundits have incessantly preached – fear.

I love my country – with its faults – and I remain convinced that the American people are fully capable of living up to the myths. We can turn the myths into facts if we try. But first we have to learn to face up to the fundamental fact that they are not yet true.

We can set aside fear and hypocrisy. We can demand that our representatives do likewise. We can call out the phony journalists and the supposed experts when they lie to us or to the world, and we can peg them for what they are.

We can become what we say we are – a caring, smart, independent, and thoughtful nation.

I have an idea on how to prove that we have changed – that we have given up the myth for the truth.

When this great effort in Haiti is over, let's vow to keep working to get all homeless veterans off the streets – come to think of it – let's get all homeless off the streets. Then maybe we will start looking like the nation we pretend that we are.

At the end of one of the Rambo movies – I forget which one – Col Trautman asks John Rambo, **"What do you want?"**

Rambo speaks for all veterans when he replies (paraphrased), **"I just want the American people to love us as much as we loved them."**[Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

LET'S SHOW THEM HOW! VETERANS – KEEP ON GIVING!

Please give what you can to help the people of Haiti. We've made it simple for you by providing the links to various organizations below.

[UNICEF](#)
[CARE](#)
[Clinton/Bush Haiti Fund](#)
[Doctors Without Borders](#)
[International Rescue Committee](#)
[Feed the Children](#)
[World Food Program](#)
[Partners in Health](#)

[Mercy Corps](#)
[Save the Children](#)

Or via cell phone text message:

Red Cross: Donate \$10 by texting "Haiti" to 90999
Yele Haiti Earthquake Fund*: Donate \$5 by texting "Yele" to 501501
Direct Relief: Donate \$10 by texting "GIVE10" to 20222

** There have been scurrilous rumors spread about Wyclef Jean's "Yele Haiti". Wyclef Jean has personally donated \$1 million to this cause. This charity is legitimate, has passed external audits with flying colors, and deserves support.*

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

2/11/2208 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.

1/20/10 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]

Sandy,

It's been a while since we've communicated. Now something has popped-up on my radar that compels me to write as this is of interest to all vets as it is an insult to everyone of us - businesses stealing opportunities from service-disabled veterans. Please take a look at www.gao.gov/new.items/d10306t.pdf.

B.F. "Jack" Jernigan

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

SENATE TO HOLD 'DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL' HEARINGS IN LATE JANUARY

Leo Shane III - Stars and Stripes Mideast edition - January 13, 2010

WASHINGTON — The Defense Department's top leaders will be among those testifying at a Senate hearing on the controversial "don't ask, don't tell" law later this month, the first in that chamber in 17 years.

On Thursday, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin, D-Mich., told reporters that both Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen will speak about the ramifications of repealing the ban on homosexuals serving openly in the military. <More at: www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=67218>

RETREAT – NEWS

MARINE'S WIDOW, BABY RETURN TO JAPAN

Associated Press January 16, 2010

NASHVILLE, Tennessee - A Marine's widow who has been fighting immigration law to remain in the U.S. to raise their 1-year-old child has returned to Japan with no clear resolution in sight.

Sgt. Michael Ferschke, Jr, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force was killed in action in Iraq 10 August 2008 Ed..

Sgt. Michael Ferschke married Hotaru Nakama by phone in 2008 while he was stationed in Iraq and she was in Japan. He died in combat a month later, but a 1950s immigration rule says the couple's marriage was not consummated - even though she was pregnant with their child.

... The family was hoping a private bill to allow her permanent residency would pass Congress before she had to go home, but the measure hasn't made much progress because of the holiday break.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/marines-widow-baby-return-to-japan.html>

VETERANS: BANISHED AND BETRAYED

Barton Kunstler, Ph.D. - January 13, 2010

"Banished veterans." The phrase shouldn't make sense. Someone joins the military, fights in a war, returns home, and then is banished? Thankfully, this can't happen here...

But it is happening here. Thousands of men and women who have risked their lives in the country's wars have been deported or are living under the threat of deportation because they committed non-violent crimes that often wouldn't warrant serving jail time. Many of these vets suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a condition often overlooked by our nation's health care system.

These vets can be deported because they are not U.S. citizens. Gabriel Delgadillo, a Vietnam veteran, committed a burglary in 1988. Eight years later, burglary was declared a deportable offense. Only then, in a retroactive application of the new law, was he deported, leaving behind a wife and seven children.

<More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/barton-kunstler-phd/veterans-banished-and-bet_b_421828.html>

RETIRED ARMY GENERAL PREDICTS 300 TO 500 CASUALTIES PER MONTH IN AFGHANISTAN

Mary Susan Littlepage - t r u t h o u t Report - 07 January 2010

The US could see as many as 300 to 500 soldiers killed and wounded per month in Afghanistan as 30,000 additional troops are sent to the country to launch a major offensive against insurgents, retired Army Gen. Barry McCaffrey said in a recent report.

McCaffrey, who is currently a professor of international affairs at the US Military Academy at West Point, said the surge will cost taxpayers about \$300 billion due to a larger US presence. <More at: www.truthout.org/0107094>

ARMY FILES CHARGES AGAINST SINGLE MOTHER

Dahr Jamail - t r u t h o u t Report - 14 January 2010

The Army has filed charges for a special court-martial against Spc. Alexis Hutchinson, a single mother of a one-year-old baby. Hutchinson missed her deployment to Afghanistan late last year when her child-care plans for her son, Kamani, fell through at the last minute.

Hutchinson and her attorneys had been working with the Army in good faith to resolve her situation administratively, rather than through the criminal process, and still hoped that would have been the most fair and compassionate way for the Army to deal with the difficult situation. <More at: <http://www.truthout.org/army-files-charges-against-single-mother56068>>

RARE IED SUCCESS: MRAPS CUT U.S. DEATH RATE IN AFGHANISTAN

Thomas L. Day - McClatchy Newspapers – 20 January 2010

KABUL — Canadian reporter Michelle Lang spent her last moments in a Canadian Light Armored Vehicle rolling down a muddy path in Kandahar province on the day before New Year's Eve.

The improvised explosive device that killed Lang and four Canadian soldiers flipped the 23-ton LAV upside down, according to the Canwest News Service, Lang's employer. The Canadian LAV-III and LAV-25 closely resemble the American Stryker, an armored vehicle that U.S. soldiers have nicknamed the "Kevlar coffin."

In Iraq and now in Afghanistan, the U.S. military has battled to keep pace as insurgents have devised IEDs that are big or sophisticated enough to cripple or destroy even the biggest American armored vehicles, the 33-ton Mine Resistant Ambush Protected armored vehicle.

The MRAP, however, is still far superior to less heavily armored vehicles such as the Stryker and the Canadian LAVs. No MRAP has ever lost its entire crew to an IED, and if Lang and the soldiers who died with her had been in one, it's less likely that the bomb would have killed them all. <More at: <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/226/story/82618.html>>

MILITARY OUTSOURCES RESCUE MISSIONS TO VIRGINIA FIRM

Noah Shachtman January 20, 2010 |

In the American military, few missions are considered more important than rescuing missing or kidnapped troops. So it's more than a little odd that U.S. forces in Iraq have decided to outsource that operation to a private company. The military's Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan on Sunday handed out a one year, \$11.3 million, no-bid contract to Blackbird Technologies Inc., declaring that the firm was "the only contractor that can currently provide the subject matter expertise needed" for personnel rescue operations.

Blackbird is already working with the military, "locating people held captive or hostage under duress and assessing enemy vulnerabilities." U.S. forces say they need the company to continue to "provid[e] staff and mission area expertise for PR [personnel recovery] operations, serve as a fusion nexus for intelligence operations to support PR, and operational oversight for subordinate operations." In addition, the military expects Blackbird to provide everything from "crisis action planning" to "tagging, tracking and locating" to "non-attributable internet research."

<More at: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/01/military-outsources-hostage-rescue-to-virginia-firm/>>

PENTAGON NOW SPENDING MORE FOR WAR THAN ALL 50 STATES COMBINED SPEND TO RUN THE COUNTRY

Sherwood Ross - 25 Dec 2009

The U.S. spends more for war annually than all state governments combined spend for the health, education, welfare, and safety of 308 million Americans.

Joseph Henchman, director of state projects for the Tax Foundation of Washington, D.C., says the states collected a total of \$781 billion in taxes in 2008.

For a rough comparison, according to Wikipedia data, the total budget for what the Pentagon calls "defense" in fiscal year 2010 will be at least \$880 billion and could possibly top \$1 trillion. That's more than all the state governments collect.

<More at: www.inteldaily.com/news/173/ARTICLE/13219/2009-12-25.html>

BUDGET CUTS TO AFFECT ARMY BASES

Kristin M. Hall - ASSOCIATED PRESS - January 11, 2010

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. | Soldiers and their families on Army bases across the country could see cutbacks in trash pickup, lawn mowing and other services as the military tries to hold down non-war spending while escalating the fight in Afghanistan.

Even as total defense spending rises, the portion of the Army budget dedicated to running its bases is down 20 percent this year, according to figures provided to the Associated Press by an Army official who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak about them. <More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/11/budget-cuts-to-affect-bases/>

DEFENSE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW MILITARY'S COMPENSATION POLICY

Tom Philpott - Special to Stars and Stripes Pacific edition - December 27, 2009

Should military pilots who have been reassigned from cockpits to ground-based computer consoles to fly remotely-piloted vehicles continue to draw the same flight pay as pilots who still fly jets and helicopters?

Should reserve component personnel on lengthy overseas assignments in locales like Germany continue to draw the same overseas cost-of-living allowances as active duty counterparts?

Is it time to review and possibly streamline various piecemeal improvements made in recent years to compensation and benefits provided to wounded warriors and their families? <More at: www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=66882>

VA WINS NATIONAL AWARD FOR SAFE MEDICATION PRACTICES

PRNewswire-USNewswire - Jan. 19 2010

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has won top national honors from the independent Institute for Safe Medication Practices for its excellence in preventing medication errors.

"As one of the first health care organizations to develop and test bar code technology for medication administration, VA takes pride in its safety standards," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said. "This honor confirms that the department is delivering excellence in health care to our nation's Veterans."

<More at: www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/va-wins-national-award-for-safe-medication-practices-82076057.html>

US VETS RETURN TO SEE GRIM LEGACY OF VIETNAM WAR

Ben Stocking - The Associated Press - January 16, 2010

DONG HA, Vietnam (AP) -- A piece of shrapnel sliced Jerry Maroney's right leg. A bullet pierced Peter Holt's neck. Les Newell took a shot in the rump.

These old American soldiers recovered from the physical scars of combat long ago. But last week, they visited a place where people still have fresh wounds from the Vietnam War, which ended nearly 35 years ago.

They came to Quang Tri Province, which is still littered with landmines and unexploded ordinance that routinely kill and maim people trying to scratch out a living in the rice fields. Their visit was organized by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which built the Washington, D.C., monument that commemorates the lives of the 58,000 Americans who died in Vietnam.

VVMF sponsors Project RENEW, a non-profit organization that helps Quang Tri residents like Pham Quy Tuan, 41, whose left hand and right arm were blown off by a leftover American projectile he found in a rice paddy four months ago.

"When I realized I'd lost my hands, all I could think about was how much I love my wife and kids, and how I would become a big burden to them," said Tuan, who also suffered severe burns and remains in chronic pain.

The VVMF delegation was led by Barry R. McCaffrey, a retired four-star general who served as President Clinton's drug czar and now appears as a military analyst on NBC news. Also participating were family members of fallen soldiers and Vietnam veterans making their first trip back to Vietnam, several of whom had personal missions.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/16/AR2010011601238.html>

TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS

| Date | Time | Where | What | Who | Notes |
|------|-----------|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1/23 | | Washington DC | Resource Fair | Sarah Cox | 202-745-8000 |
| 1/28 | 1000-1600 | Hilton Palacio del Rio 200 S. Alamo St., San Antonio, TX | Southwest Regional Career Event | | Register |
| 2/4 | 1000-1600 | Tampa Convention Center 333 S. Franklin St., Tampa, FL | Gulf Coast Regional Career Event | | Register |
| 2/5 | | Phoenix AZ | Stand Down | Donna Bleyle | 602-305-8585 |

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

VETERANS' BENEFITS ENTANGLED IN RED TAPE

Amanda Carpenter - December 31, 2009

Leading Democrats like to hold up the Veterans Benefits Administration as an example of how well government can provide health care. But veterans who deal with the complex federal bureaucracy have invented an unhappy refrain to describe the VBA: "Deny, deny until you die."

VBA, the branch of the Department of Veterans Affairs that dispenses aid and assistance to veterans and their families, is simply overwhelmed. It reported on Monday that there are 481,751 pending claims, some of which will take more than a year to be processed.

Among those flooding the VBA's facilities with claims are retirement-aged Vietnam veterans and elderly World War II veterans, middle-aged Gulf War veterans, and younger Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. All of these groups are applying in larger numbers because of the weak economy, said Larry Scott, the founder of the advocacy group VAwatchdog.org.

<More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/dec/31/veteran-benefits-entangled-in-heaping-red-tape/>

PENTAGON LIMITS LAW'S PLEDGE TO ITS WOUNDED VETERANS

Amanda Carpenter - December 28, 2009

Veterans groups hailed the passage last year of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which made it easier for wounded soldiers to have their injuries rated and treated by the federal government.

But less than a year after President Bush signed the bill, the Defense Department interpreted the law in a way that reduced its scope and denied many veterans the benefits they thought they had been promised.

The Pentagon's interpretation, which veterans groups are challenging, is laid out in two memos written in 2008 by David S.C. Chu, who was undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

The effect of the memos, which have been obtained by The Washington Times, is to disqualify numerous soldiers who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder from receiving medical benefits and to prevent others from receiving extra pay that the NDAA promised to veterans with combat-related injuries.

In drafting the NDAA, Congress relied on the recommendations of a bipartisan panel headed by former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala.

The legislation permitted troops who were injured during training operations to receive extra pay, but Mr. Chu, in one of his memos, defined "combat-related operations" in such a way that troops injured during training or simulated conditions of war would not qualify. <More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/dec/28/pentagon-limits-laws-pledge-to-wounded/>

DOG HELPS IRAQ VET WITH PTSD: 'MY LITTLE MARINE'

AP - 14 January 2010

Life has become calmer, safer and less stressful for Chris Goehner since he paired up with Pele, according to this story by the Associated Press.

Goehner, 25, a Wenatchee Valle, Wash., native now attending Central Washington University, suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which has afflicted him since serving two tours as a U.S. Navy corpsman attached to a U.S. Marine Corps emergency room unit in Iraq. He worked as a medic in Kuwait and Iraq in 2004 and 2005, before being diagnosed with PTSD and discharged in 2006.

Pele is his service dog. Since November, the two have become inseparable.

Goehner is one of only 21 Iraq War veterans suffering from PTSD who have been paired with service dogs since the military recently started a new program to try to help soldiers with the disorder.

Pele was trained for the program by an organization called Puppies Behind Bars. The nonprofit organization uses prison inmates to train service dogs in several New York regional prisons. For a story and video on the training of the dogs click [here](#).

<More at: <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/pawprintpost/post/2010/01/dog-helps-iraq-vet-with-ptsd-my-little-marine/1>>

STUDY: FAST MORPHINE TREATMENT MAY PREVENT PTSD

Linda A. Johnson - The Associated Press - Jan. 15, 2010

Quickly giving morphine to wounded troops cuts in half the chance they will develop post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a provocative study that suggests a new strategy for preventing the psychological fallout of war.

Researchers at the U.S. Naval Health Research Center led the study of about 700 troops injured in Iraq from 2004 through 2006.

"It was surprising how strong the effect of the morphine was," said study leader Troy Lisa Holbrook, an epidemiologist at the naval center. The findings were published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

<More at: http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/health/2010785979_apusmedpreventingptsd.html>

BLOOD PRESSURE PILL SLAYS NIGHTMARES

Scott Fontaine - December 31, 2009

TACOMA, WASH. -- The war followed Gillian Boice home from Iraq and into her dreams.

The thrashing would begin minutes after the Army officer fell asleep. She sometimes screamed out battle orders. She often woke the next morning already exhausted.

Relief came in the form of a decades-old blood pressure drug that military health specialists have turned into a leading treatment for nightmares, after experimenting with it as a long shot.

"Prazosin has changed so, so much in my life," said Boice, a retired military police lieutenant colonel living in Olympia, Wash. "I couldn't sleep before, and it's given me my nights back."

Thousands of veterans who fought in conflicts ranging from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan are taking prazosin for trauma-related nightmares. Its nighttime use started at the Seattle VA hospital and has spread across the country.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/30/AR2009123002627.html >

DINGELL, STUPAK, MILLER CALL ON NAVY TO FUND CAMP LEJEUNE STUDIES

Salem-News.com - Jan-15, 2010

(WASHINGTON D.C.) - U.S. Congressmen John D. Dingell (D-MI), Bart Stupak (D-MI), and Brad Miller (D-NC) sent a letter today to Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus regarding an unresolved dispute with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Diseases Registry (ATSDR) over funding of health studies related to the contaminated drinking water at U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

The Navy has failed to provide funding requested by ATSDR for a cohort mortality study and a health survey as required by law. ATSDR has stated the cost of the mortality study at \$1.5 million. The health survey's full cost has not yet been determined. The letter and ATSDR's full request can be found attached to this release.

The Congressmen state in their letter the Navy is obligated by law to pay for these studies. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act – commonly known as the Superfund statute – states that the liable party (the Navy, in this case) is obligated to pay for the health studies the ATSDR administrator deems necessary.

The letter also expressed concern that the Navy continues to delay efforts to provide a more meaningful understanding of the health problems incurred by former Camp Lejeune residents. <More at: <http://salem-news.com/articles/january152010/lejeune.php>>

DOD, VA REALIGN DISABILITY RATINGS CLAIMS PROCESS

Suzanne Ovel - Jan 19, 2010

Soldiers being medically released from the Army will soon benefit from a more streamlined disability evaluation system, due to a program aligning the Department of Defense's and Department of Veterans Affairs' disability evaluations.

Starting Feb. 4, Soldiers entering the Army's medical evaluation board will simultaneously apply for VA disability claims; those Soldiers already in an MEB will be grandfathered in and will not switch over to the new system.

Conducting both processes at once means a shortened wait time after separating to receive a VA disability check.

Under the new system, once Soldiers separate they'll have severance/retirement from the Army and disability from the VA within 30 days of separation, said Maj. Theresa Saville, chief of the patient administration division at Madigan Army Medical Center. <More at: <http://www.army.mil/news/2010/01/19/33108-dod-va-realign-disability-ratings-claims-process/>>

MILITARY MISCONDUCT MAY BE SIGN OF PTSD

Amanda Carpenter - January 12, 2010

In 2007, a high-ranking Navy doctor sent a sobering warning to colleagues: The service may be discharging soldiers for misconduct when in fact they are merely displaying symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

By doing so, the anonymous doctor noted in a memo to other medical administrators, the service may be denying those troops their rights to Veterans Affairs benefits — including treatment for medical conditions they incurred while serving on the battlefield.

In the future, any military personnel facing dismissal for misconduct after a deployment should be screened first for PTSD, the memo said. The recommendation was never implemented.

<More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jan/12/misconduct-may-be-symptom-of-stress-disorder/?source=newsletter_must-read-stories-today_headlines>

SUICIDE IS RISING AMONG YOUNG MALE WAR VETERANS

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - January 12, 2010

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Home from war and out of the military, young male veterans appear to be committing suicide at a higher rate.

The Veterans Affairs Department said Monday that preliminary data reflects that the suicide rate among 18- to 29-year-old male veterans has increased significantly. It said the rate went up 26 percent from 2005 to 2007. VA officials said they assume that most of the veterans in this age group served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

If there is a bright spot in the data, it's that in 2007 veterans in the group who used VA health care were less likely to commit suicide than those who did not. That's a change from 2005. <More at: www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/washington/6810588.html>

A MENTAL WAR FOR ARMY WIVES

Jan 14, 2010

Military wives often try not to complain, but a large-scale study published today suggests that they have a right to, citing elevated rates of depression, sleep disorders, anxiety and other mental-health problems among women whose husbands were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The study looked at electronic medical data for more than 250,000 of the nearly 300,000 women whose active-duty husbands were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan from 2003 to 2006. It appears in the New England Journal of Medicine and was Alyssa J. Mansfield's doctoral dissertation at UNC-Chapel Hill's Gillings School of Global Public Health.

"The results that we found won't come as a surprise to Army leaders," said Mansfield, who is now a researcher at RTI International. "It's probably something they have assumed. But it's an opportunity to kind of quantify what's going on."

The study found that 36.6 percent of women whose husbands had deployed had at least one mental-health diagnosis, compared with 30.5 percent of women whose husbands had not deployed.

<More at: www.newsobserver.com/news/local_state/story/283450.html>

JCS CHAIRMAN'S WIFE SAYS MILITARY SPOUSES ALSO FACE SUICIDE RISK

Kimberly Hefling - Associated Press Writer - Jan. 13, 2010

The wife of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a message Wednesday for those trying to prevent military suicides: Don't forget the spouses.

Deborah Mullen said Army leaders told her that they lack the ability to track suicide attempts by family members of Army personnel. <More at: www.miamiherald.com/news/politics/AP/story/1422540.html>

BEREAVED KIN PUSH FOR MILITARY CONDOLENCE LETTERS

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS – 19 January 2010

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Army Pfc. Brian Matthew Williams, 20, took his own life the day before he was to return to Iraq. Because it was a suicide, the president didn't send a condolence letter to his family. Nobody has planted a tree in his honor or carved his name onto a memorial wall.

Advocates for bereaved military families say soldiers like Williams deserve better. They're asking President Barack Obama to send condolence letters to the next of kin of troops who die under a variety of circumstances not directly related to the war.

"Every military family pays a price when a loved one serves in the military," Bonnie Carroll, a military widow who founded the advocacy group Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, wrote in a letter sent to Obama on Tuesday, as veterans and military officials met in Washington for a four-day suicide prevention conference.

<More at: www.nytimes.com/aponline/2010/01/13/us/politics/AP-US-Honoring-the-Fallen.html>

VIRTUAL REALITY EXPOSURE THERAPY TO COMBAT PTSD

Lorin T. Smith (Army Medicine - Madigan Army Medical Center) Jan 19, 2010

FORT LEWIS, Wash. (Jan. 19, 2010) -- This summer, thousands of Joint Base Lewis-McChord Soldiers will return home from deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, ready to reunite with family and loved ones. But for some, the war will not be over.

The Improvised Explosive Device that killed their best friend while on a mission will play over and over again in a few Soldiers' minds. For others, who may have just finished up their third or fourth deployment in less than a decade, may recall traumatic events and describe them with little or no emotion, similar to giving results for an after-action review.

Behavioral health providers have treatment options for Soldiers dealing with these serious examples of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but one in particular is receiving lots of attention in the medical community - Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy.

<More at: www.army.mil/-news/2010/01/19/33128-virtual-reality-exposure-therapy-to-combat-ptsd/>

SICKENED BY SERVICE

A three-part series by Matthew D. LaPlante in the Salt Lake Tribune is an exceptional exposé of the adverse health results of military service.

What doesn't kill you ~ 01/16/2010

Government waits for proof - sometimes for decades - before caring for sick veterans. ~ The VA requires former service members to prove an illness was caused by military service. www.sltrib.com/news/ci_14182249

The latest hazard? ~ 01/16/2010

Vets: Burn pits are killing us ~ But sickened warriors searching for help will have to wait for science and government bureaucracy to link their conditions to their service. www.sltrib.com/news/ci_14182242

The Proving Ground ~ 01/17/2010

Vets say toxic tests sickened them; government says prove it ~ Army says it used 'voluntary human subjects,' but ill man says 'I was private first class I did anything they told me to do.' www.sltrib.com/news/ci_14182244

ALSO BY MATTHEW LAPLANTE

OFFICIALS JUST NOW RECOGNIZING AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURES

Matthew D. LaPlante - The Salt Lake Tribune -01/15/2010

... It took decades of research and political pressure before the federal government began recognizing certain medical conditions were related to Agent Orange exposure. Early this year, an order from Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki will take effect, permitting Vietnam veterans with certain types of heart disease, leukemia and Parkinson's disease to access additional care and disability payments.

Over the past 40 years, according to VA records, about 86,000 veterans who suffered from these conditions were denied benefits. Some will now collect retroactive compensation. Many others have already died. More at: www.sltrib.com/news/ci_14182220>

FOR U.S., A RECORD OF NEGLECT

Chicago Tribune "Watchdog" Report

An excellent 5-part report on Agent Orange

U.S. veterans exposed to Agent Orange face delays and a maddening bureaucracy as they seek compensation for related illnesses. In Vietnam, where untold numbers of people suffer from the same maladies and the chemicals continue to poison the environment, government officials wonder how the U.S. can ignore the ongoing effects of the defoliants.

<More at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/health/agentorange/>

THE RETURN OF AGENT ORANGE

Washington Monthly/New America event

Decades after the U.S. military sprayed Agent Orange on the jungles of Vietnam, the long-acting toxin is still damaging lives in that country. Now, after years of silence, the government of Vietnam -- an increasingly important U.S. ally -- is demanding compensation. In a special report in the latest issue of the *Washington Monthly*, [Walter Isaacson argues](#) that the time has come for America to face this final legacy of the Vietnam War; [Geoffrey Cain and Joshua Kurlantzick make the case](#) that doing so would be profoundly beneficial to U.S. strategic interests; [Clay Risen explains](#) why militaries almost never clean up the

environmental messes they leave behind; and [Phillip Longman reports](#) that hundreds of thousands of American GIs who served in Vietnam but aren't receiving VA care have contracted chronic diseases that, according to new medical research, may be linked to Agent Orange exposure. View the report: "[The Agent Orange Boomerang](#)"

IF YOU MISSED THE "60 MINUTES" REPORT ON THE VA YOU CAN SEE IT HERE:

www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6037885n&tag=contentMain;contentBody

A PERIL IN WAR ZONES: SEXUAL ABUSE BY FELLOW G.I.'S

Steven Lee Myers - December 28, 2009

BAGHDAD — Capt. Margaret H. White began a relationship with a warrant officer while both were training to be deployed to Iraq. By the time they arrived this year at Camp Taji, north of here, she felt what she called "creepy vibes" and tried to break it off.

In the claustrophobic confines of a combat post, it was not easy to do. He left notes on the door to her quarters, alternately pleading and menacing. He forced her to have sex, she said. He asked her to marry him, though he was already married. He waited for her outside the women's latrines or her quarters, once for three hours.

"It got to the point that I felt safer outside the wire," Captain White said, referring to operations that take soldiers off their heavily fortified bases, "than I did taking a shower."

Her ordeal ended with the military equivalent of a restraining order and charges of stalking against the officer. It is one case that highlights the new and often messy reality the military has had to face as men and women serve side by side in combat zones more than ever before.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault, which the military now defines broadly to include not only rape but also crimes like groping and stalking, continue to afflict the ranks, and by some measures are rising.

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/28/us/28women.html>>

FILIPINO WWII VETERANS AWAIT PAYMENTS

WAIPAHU, Hawaii -- Many Filipino veterans of World War II are still waiting to receive benefit payments the U.S. government authorized last year.

... More than 11,000 surviving veterans now in their 80s and 90s have already received their money from the Department of Veterans Affairs. But thousands more are still waiting to receive their money as the federal government wades through a backlog of applications. <More at: www.kitv.com/news/22259413/detail.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF JANUARY 12, 2010

This week the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard announced an increase in activated reservists, while the Marine Corps announced a decrease. The net collective result is 3,915 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 112,150; Navy Reserve, 6,819; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 16,843; Marine Corps Reserve, 6,654; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 770. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 143,236, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found at www.defense.gov/news/Jan2010/d20100112nqr.pdf

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,498 DAYS)

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| KILLED US | 4,373 |
| WOUNDED US [1/2/09] | 31,616 |
| OTHER US CASUALTIES [1/2/09] | ≥46,608 |
| DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [1/2/09] | 197 |
| MISSING OR CAPTURED US | 1 |
| KILLED UK | 179 |
| KILLED OTHER COALITION | 139 |
| WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION | 1,819 |
| **KILLED CONTRACTORS [1/9/08] | 1,182 |
| KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09] | ≥ 48,874 |
| KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [1/20/09] | ≥ 103,718 – 1,366,350 |
| WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS[1/20/10] | ≥ 400K – 1.432M |
| IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07] | 2.1M/2.5M |

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (3,027 DAYS)

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| KILLED US | 965 |
| WOUNDED US [1/2/09] | 4,748 |
| OTHER CASUALTIES US [1/2/09] | 10,552 |
| DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [1/2/09] | 35 |
| MISSING OR CAPTURED US | 1 |
| KILLED COALITION | 632 |
| 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 | \$702,511,136,768 |
| COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE | \$248,780,169,672 |

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

HOW WILL HEALTH CARE REFORM REALLY AFFECT YOUR TRICARE?

James E. Hamby Jr.

A number of readers have written to Tricare Help recently concerning President Barack Obama's plans for reforming the nation's health care system.

Because of the amount of conflicting and misleading information, the writers were confused — and some frightened — about possible harmful effects of those plans on their Tricare and Tricare for Life coverage.

Some unofficial comments and rumors have been circulating on the Internet and elsewhere that claim the president's and Congress' plans will seriously damage or destroy Tricare and Tricare for Life coverage.

In keeping with my established policy of not involving Tricare Help in public disputes, I will not comment on the rumors themselves; each reader will have to decide for himself the credibility of the different sources — the president or unofficial Internet sources.

But here is some information made public by official sources:

- The House Education and Labor Committee has issued a definitive statement saying that health care reform proposals being discussed have been specifically designed to shield Tricare, Tricare for Life and Veterans Affairs Department health care programs from any requirements or penalties that could become part of legislation.
- Obama met with the American Legion recently and specifically reiterated that Tricare and VA health care provisions will not be changed. He later confirmed those facts in a meeting with several military-related publications, including Military Times.
- At the national Veterans of Foreign Wars conference Aug. 17, Obama made similar statements that there will be no reduction in Medicare benefits. Reducing Medicare costs would come from reducing fraud and abuse. Obama went on to say that he plans to increase VA benefits, including improved access to care, particularly for mental health, and to reduce the backlog of benefit claims appeals — estimated in some cases to be as much as 1½ years.
- Visit www.whitehouse.gov/realitycheck/faq. White House statements regarding Medicare and VA are easy to find. All report that none of the military-related medical benefit programs will be cut, curtailed or reduced.

Something to keep in mind during discussions to come is that Tricare, including Tricare for Life, is not a health insurance company or insurance policy. It is a federal health benefits program created by its own law and governed by its own regulation that interprets and implements that law. Thus, any rules affecting health insurance companies or policies should have no effect on Tricare.

http://www.armytimes.com/benefits/health/offduty_tricarehelp_090709w/

THIS IS FROM "FACTCHECK.ORG"

HEALTH CARE OVERHAUL AND TRICARE

November 10, 2009

Q: Would health care overhaul efforts eliminate TRICARE health coverage for members of the military and military retirees?

A: No. This claim in a chain e-mail is false. Neither Congress nor President Obama has proposed legislation to that effect. <http://www.factcheck.org/2009/11/health-care-overhaul-and-tricare/>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

22 MILITARY SUPPLIER EXECS INDICTED IN FBI STING ON PAYING FOREIGN BRIBES

Pete Yost, Associated Press – 19 January 2010

WASHINGTON — Twenty-two executives and employees at suppliers to the military and law enforcement agencies were arrested on the eve of their industry's annual trade show in Las Vegas after a 2 1/2-year undercover sting operation aimed at schemes to bribe a foreign official.

The Justice Department called the case the largest single investigation and prosecution of individuals in the history of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which bars bribery of foreign government officials. It also is the first large-scale use of an undercover operation in enforcing the corrupt practices act.

Twenty-one of the 22 people caught up in the case were arrested in Las Vegas, where they were preparing to attend the 2010 Shooting, Hunting & Outdoor Trade Show.

<More at: http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/regulation/2010-01-19-fbi-foreign-bribes-sting_N.htm

ROBOTS ON THE WAY TO HELP SOLDIERS

Knight Ridder/Tribune - January 16, 2010

Fort Bliss is once again at the head of the pack when it comes to innovation and high-tech "gee whiz" equipment and weapons systems.

The 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division will be receiving robots, precision rockets, sensors and a system that will allow for reliable communications between Soldiers and between Soldiers and the equipment.

It's all part of the old Future Combat Systems program, parts of which have been halted for re-evaluation.

While the robots might seem like sci-fi, they will save Soldiers' lives. The robots will be able to scout out places ahead of the Soldiers, such as dangerous urban settings, give Soldiers an idea of what they're up against, and take enemy fire when necessary. The robots' agility is amazing as some fly and some crawl.

They can provide a huge advantage in areas such as reconnaissance and the extremely perilous work of clearing buildings, for example. Precision, remotely controlled rockets give Soldiers a valuable and accurate weapons system, and the ability to communicate among themselves and with their equipment contributes to battlefield coordination and efficiency.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/news/article/robots-on-the-way-to-help-soldiers.html>>

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.]

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC. ADVISORY BOARD

CHARLES "CHARLIE" BROWN, LTC USAF (RET)
GOVERNOR MICHAEL DUKAKIS (FRMR USA)
EVELYN (PAT) FOOTE, BG USA (RET)
HON. JOHN GARAMENDI (CA LT. GOVERNOR)
D. O. HELMICK, (FRMR CMSNR CHP ~ FRMR CANG)

ART HICKS, CMSGT USAF (RET)-[TUSKEGEE AIRMAN]
JOSEPH P. HOAR, GEN USMC (RET)
HON. P. N. "PETE" McCLOSKEY, COL USMCR (RET)
ARTHUR "ART" TORRES, (FRMR CA SENATOR)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| CHAIR | BOB HANDY |
| VICE CHAIR | SANDY COOK |
| SECRETARY | VITALI MOSTOVOJ |
| TREASURER | RUSS WEED |
| AT LARGE | RON DEXTER |
| AT LARGE | GEORGE GIACOPPE |
| AT LARGE | ROGER HART |
| AT LARGE | DON KATZ |

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| <u>COMMITTEES</u> | |
| COMMISSION | GEORGE GIACOPPE |
| CHAPTERS | ROGER HART |
| LEGISLATIVE | BOB HANDY |
| NEWSLETTER | SANDY COOK |

Fair Use Notice

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

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

Want to join us? Please apply for membership at www.vuft.org It's FREE!

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

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

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

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