

# SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 11

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

*“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”*

25 JANUARY 2007

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

### IT'S NOT JUST ANOTHER JOB!

We argue about what is right and what is wrong and we seldom do anything about what is wrong to make it right. What's wrong right now is that we have found that if we treat soldiering as just another job, we don't have to bear any personal burden for those who take the job, since it is no different than slinging hash or pumping gas.

We have to ask ourselves what kind of a country we want to be; what kind of a foreign policy we ought to project; what kind of an armed force we ought to have; and only then can we speak to what we owe those who serve us so faithfully.

I would be satisfied if my country were the country politicians speak to in their speeches. A country of laws, not men – governed by the same laws for all, not by the whim of a few. I want my government to meticulously follow the Constitution and protect the nation when it is threatened, decide on its course, deliberate with the clear separation of powers the Constitution mandates, protect our citizens rights at all costs, and establish the model for free democracies everywhere.

I want my country to treat other nations and their citizens as we demand that they treat us – maybe better, but no worse – but we should set the example: after all, we have a head start. Their wishes may not be ours, but they deserve consideration and they deserve the respect, freely given, that we demand for ourselves.

With those two conditions in place, then all citizens might understand their obligation to defend the country. They might also understand the nature of what we ask our soldiers to do, and how valuable that is to us. When Congress declares that we must fight, then that declaration should automatically involve every citizen. The soldier's life is surely affected - disrupted families; substandard pay; endless workdays; and their lives are not their own. If it is fair for the soldier, then every citizen should be affected in the pocketbook, in the workplace, at their homes – everywhere.

Congress should know that with such a decision they are committing every voter and every voter's child. If they screw it up, then every citizen is going to be angry, and they will pay for their mistakes. When they decide on war, then they must commit to all of the costs, present and future. They also need to know that they cannot ignore their duty, hand that decision off to others and remain blameless.

Those who serve should have an exceptional place in our care for the remainder of their lives to compensate for their great sacrifice. That sacrifice changes their lives forever. They step out of the mainstream and that affects schooling, jobs, family cohesiveness, all relationships. We know for sure that those disturbances are never fully repaired. They go in harm's way or at least are vulnerable to

harm for our sakes. That deserves more than just a conventional employment contract.

During World War II we were all in it together. We served in uniform: we served in the factories and on the farms. Rationing was an essential part of the war effort – just so much meat, gas, sugar – one pair of shoes a year. And scrap drives – you think recycling is tough today? Remember? Some of us do. All of us should.

We postponed every type of personal and political goal. And we paid the bill. When those who served came home we made it up to them through the GI Bill and the VA, and we did a pretty good job. Now we ask a small group to bear the entire load, and since they are such a small group, we ignore the fact that their needs are the same or greater than those who served in the '40s. We now say we can't afford to be as good to the current soldiers as we were before, and line up slick economic arguments for not rewarding their service.

The patchwork approach to mending service contracts and veterans benefits doesn't work. We need to recast the idea of national military service. We must commit to meeting the needs of the serving soldier as soon as the need is identified. Whatever their families need ought to be supplied without delay. If their children need medical attention they should be able to go to the nearest doctor and not have to pay. If their children are in a local school the school should be compensated immediately for the additional load. If their families need help while they are deployed, that help should be there, and now.

When they return they should have a valid promise of time to reconstruct their family lives, with long enough between tours to guarantee a chance to make that work. If they are wounded they should receive life-time care, and that includes mental health care.

And every citizen should pay.

Others may have described it better, but one state legislator in Illinois put it pretty well a few years back when he said,

*“When we send our young men and women into harm's way, we have a solemn obligation not to fudge the numbers or shade the truth about why they're going, to care for their families while they're gone, to tend to the soldiers upon their return, and to never ever go to war without enough troops to win the war, secure the peace, and earn the respect of the world.”*

Barack Obama, July 2004 [Ed.]

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

### **WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!**

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

### **CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!**

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT [WWW.VUFT.ORG](http://WWW.VUFT.ORG).

## ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

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

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

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

If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at [rhandy@vuft.org](mailto:rhandy@vuft.org) or the Vice Chair at [scook@vuft.org](mailto:scook@vuft.org). Watch for details at [www.vuft.org](http://www.vuft.org)

## MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

### **FROM AMY FAIRWEATHER AT *SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES* IN SAN FRANCISCO**

Hi All -

Following links to a list of non-governmental, confidential, free counseling services throughout the country for OIF/OEF veterans and their families. <http://ptsdcombat.blogspot.com/2007/01/need-transition-help-free-resources.html>

Pass it on. ~ Amy

### **VETERANS HAVE A RIGHT TO GOOD HEALTH CARE**

Carl Young - Letter to the Eureka Reporter - 11/27/2006

[Carl is a member of VUFT. His email address is [carlhandup@suddenlink.net](mailto:carlhandup@suddenlink.net)

(Editor's note: This letter was sent to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson. It has been reprinted here with the author's permission.)

When are you going to take the actions necessary to address your legally mandated duties to conduct the "outreach activities" that might cause additional veterans to seek their "earned" VA Health Care Benefits? As you may know, Congress enacted and the president signed Public Law 109-114, the Military Construction, Military Quality of Life and Veterans' Affairs Appropriations Act, 2006, which stopped your agency's moratorium of restricting veterans' knowledge about their benefits. With exception to our "Veterans Readjustment Counseling Centers," no overall coordinated efforts have been made to make veterans aware of these "lifeline" health care benefits.

Your agency issued a memorandum, dated July 18, 2002, directing all your health care network directors to cease any marketing (outreach) activities to events such as health fairs, veteran open houses, enrollment displays at veterans service organizations and effectively stopping all VA medical personnel from sharing information about earned health care benefits. What little outreach there is is limited to vet center counselors in conjunction with their other assigned duties.

This action and the denial of health care benefits to a whole category of other veterans has resulted in some veterans and their families not being able to afford health care and shifting the costs for many to state and local health care programs already suffering from under-funding. Unreported by the mainline media is the unemployment rate of 15 percent for (veterans age) 20 to

24, the increasing number of at-risk veterans who are currently "missing in America" and the lack of resolve by our government leaders to address these issues.

There are now more than 45 million people in the United States who have no health care coverage.

How many of these people are uninformed veterans who have earned these health care benefits? I believe this continued lack of "reaching out" to our fellow veterans is at best a "slap in the face" and at the very least a national disgrace. Your unwritten policy of saving money through your agency's lack of outreach activities and denial of care to a certain category of veterans is disgraceful.

We urge you to take those steps necessary to ensure our fellow veterans receive the information they need to obtain the care they deserve, and that you ask for the budget necessary to truly reflect the health care needs of our veterans.

[www.eurekareporter.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?ArticleID=17896](http://www.eurekareporter.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?ArticleID=17896)

## **RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS**

### **MAYBE THEY SHOULD ADD THEM TO THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT BILL WOULD PROTECT MILITARY, VETERANS FROM DISCRIMINATION**

Whitney Cork- Herald Staff Writer Olympia, WA - January 24, 2007

OLYMPIA - Washington State soldiers are battling an unseen enemy in their hometowns - discrimination.

State lawmakers want to provide them with the weapon they need to win this battle. A proposed bill would add veterans and people with military status to an existing law banning discrimination in matters of employment, credit, insurance and property transactions.

"Unfortunately, some Washingtonians have vented their anger about the Iraq war onto the men and women who followed orders and put their lives on the line," said bill author Sen. Steve Hobbs, D-Lake Stevens. "We need to protect those who have protected us," he said.

The Senate Committee on Government Operations and Elections passed the bill unanimously Tuesday. If it becomes law, Washington will be the fifth state to enact such legislation.

<More at: [http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420AP\\_WA\\_XGR\\_Veteran\\_Discrimination.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/local/6420AP_WA_XGR_Veteran_Discrimination.html)>

### **WEBB DOES MORE FOR TROOPS IN ONE DAY THAN [OTHERS] DID IN YEARS**

Bob Geiger - January 12, 2007

Keeping a promise he made on the campaign trail in 2006, Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) did more for the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan on his first day in the Senate than the man he ousted, George Felix Allen, did in the entire previous Congress. Going unnoticed in the frenzy of Democrats assuming control of Capitol Hill and George W. Bush seeking to plunge the country deeper into the Iraq quagmire, Webb introduced the *Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2007*, legislation that will provide the newest Veterans with educational benefits like those received by men and women who served in the three decades following World War II.

"As a veteran who hails from a family with a long history of military service, I am proud to offer this bill as my first piece of legislation in the United States Senate," said Webb, in introducing his bill last week. "The G.I. bill program was designed to help veterans readjust to civilian life, avoid high levels of unemployment, and give veterans the opportunity to receive the education and training that they missed while bravely serving in the military."

<More at: [www.opednews.com/articles/opedne\\_bob\\_geig\\_070112\\_webb\\_does\\_more\\_for\\_t.htm](http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne_bob_geig_070112_webb_does_more_for_t.htm)>

### **CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCES REINSTATEMENT OF JOINT VETERANS COMMITTEE LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS**

Washington, D.C. - Today, congressional leadership from both the House of Representatives and Senate made good on their commitment to America's veterans. In a joint statement issued today, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner, and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel Akaka announced the reinstatement of the traditional joint hearings process in which veterans and military service organizations appear before the Veterans' Affairs Committees. Today's announcement reversed the decision of GOP leadership in the House of Representatives last Congress. <More at: <http://www.speaker.gov/newsroom/pressreleases>>

## **RETREAT – NEWS**

### **PETRAEUS SAYS 'TOUGH DAYS' AHEAD**

Associated Press - January 23, 2007

WASHINGTON - The Army general who would carry out President Bush's new war plan urged a skeptical Congress and American public Tuesday to be patient, but acknowledged "the situation in Iraq is dire."

"None of this will be rapid," Lt. Gen. David Petraeus told the Senate Armed Services Committee. "The way ahead will be neither quick nor easy."

Many in Congress, including some Republicans, oppose Bush's plan, which would send an extra 21,500 U.S. troops to Iraq as part of a revised strategy for quelling sectarian violence in Baghdad and stabilizing the country. Before Bush's build up began in recent days, there were 132,000 U.S. troops there. <More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,123043,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,123043,00.html)>

### **ARMY, MARINE CHIEFS CITE NEED TO RESET NON-DEPLOYED FORCES**

Gerry J. Gilmore - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23, 2007 – The senior officers of two military services told a congressional committee today that although soldiers and Marines are performing well overseas in the war against terrorism, more troops and money are needed to refurbish non-deployed military forces. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker and Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James T. Conway testified before the House Armed Services Committee. ... the Army is now wrestling with the task of rebuilding its stateside forces while supporting those stationed overseas, Schoomaker said.

"The immediate challenge lies with the readiness of the non-deployed forces," Schoomaker said, noting the Army needs Congress's support to address issues critical to maintaining the Army's overall readiness to respond decisively to potential contingencies. <More at: [www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2791](http://www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2791)>

### **THEY KEEP FINDING NEW SOURCES OF RECRUITS**

#### **ARMY'S 'BLUE TO GREEN' PROGRAM HITS MILESTONE**

Samantha L. Quigley - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 24, 2007 – The Army's "Blue to Green" program, designed to allow airmen, sailors and Marines affected by force shaping to move to the Army, recently hit a milestone, a Defense Department official said here today.

"Just in the past couple of weeks we've had our 1,000th transfer," Bill Carr, acting deputy undersecretary of defense for military personnel policy, said in an interview.

An effect of the Air Force and Navy downsizing is fewer opportunities for airmen, sailors and Marines to continue in their career fields, he said. The Army's Blue to Green inter-service transfer program, open to officers and enlisted personnel, affords an alternative to leaving military service. <More at: [www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2805](http://www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2805)>

### **ONLY 21,000 MORE BLUE-TO-GREEN AND THEY CAN MAN THE "SURGE"! MAYBE THEY'LL GET THE OTHERS HERE?**

#### **FBI: GANG MEMBERS JOINING MILITARY**

United Press International - 1/21/2007

Motorcycle and street gang members have joined the U.S. military and served in Iraq, a new FBI report says. The FBI described the gang presence as a growing threat, the Chicago Sun-Times reported. The military enlistment of gang members could ultimately lead to the worldwide expansion of U.S.-based gangs, the report said. The Defense Department does not track gang membership in the military. But FBI investigators believe the reduction in enlistment standards -- due to recruitment pressure related to the Iraq War -- has brought more gang members in.

<More at: [www.wetmtv.com/mostpopular/story.aspx?content\\_id=c3498572-e55b-4361-a0fb-890d91a0247a](http://www.wetmtv.com/mostpopular/story.aspx?content_id=c3498572-e55b-4361-a0fb-890d91a0247a)>

### **OR HERE?**

#### **RANGEL PUSHES SECOND MILITARY DRAFT BILL**

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Saturday Jan 13, 2007

Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., introduced a new military draft bill Wednesday and a resolution calling on the Defense Department to drop all restrictions on families, the public and the media being present when the remains of service members arrive and depart from military bases. Neither of his proposals have much chance of passing.

His draft bill is HR 393. The resolution on watching the arrival and departure of remains from bases in the U.S. and overseas is HConRes 29. Both measures were referred to the House Armed Services Committee for consideration. Rangel said HR 393 "requires that, during wartime, all legal residents of the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 42 would be subject to a military draft." The number of people drafted would be left to the president.

"No deferments would be allowed beyond the completion of high school, up to age 20, except for conscientious objectors or those with health problems," he said.

The bill also would mandate that anyone not needed in the military would have to serve two years of civilian service, working in hospitals or in homeland security jobs. <More at: [www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2007/01/tnsDraftbill070112/](http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2007/01/tnsDraftbill070112/)>

## **OR HERE?**

### **RESERVE, GUARD TIME LIMIT LIFTED**

Associated Press - January 12, 2007

WASHINGTON - The Pentagon has abandoned its limit on the time a Citizen-Soldier can be required to serve on active duty, officials said Thursday, a major change that reflects an Army stretched thin by longer-than-expected combat in Iraq.

The day after President Bush announced his plan for a deeper U.S. military commitment in Iraq, Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters the change in reserve policy would have been made anyway because active-duty troops already were getting too little time between their combat tours.

... Until now, the Pentagon's policy on the Guard or Reserve was that members' cumulative time on active duty for the Iraq or Afghan wars could not exceed 24 months. That cumulative limit is now lifted; the remaining limit is on the length of any single mobilization, which may not exceed 24 consecutive months, Pace said.

In other words, a Citizen-Soldier could be mobilized for a 24-month stretch in Iraq or Afghanistan, then demobilized and allowed to return to civilian life, only to be mobilized a second time for as much as an additional 24 months. In practice, Pace said, the Pentagon intends to limit all future mobilizations to 12 months.

Members of the Guard combat brigades that have served in Iraq in recent years spent 18 months on active duty - about six months in pre-deployment training in the United States, followed by about 12 months in Iraq. Under the old policy, they could not be sent back to Iraq because their cumulative time on active duty would exceed 24 months. Now that cumulative limit has been lifted, giving the Pentagon more flexibility. <More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,122088,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,122088,00.html)>

## **OR EVEN HERE – CAN'T YOU SEE THE ECONOMISTS RUSHING TO ENLIST? U. S. TO INCREASE CIVILIAN ADVISORY ROLE IN IRAQ, GENERAL SAYS**

John J. Kruzel - American Forces Press Service - January 19, 2007

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19, 2007 - Stepping up civilian advisors' role in Iraq is a key part of President Bush's diplomatic strategy to stabilize the country, the chief operations officer for the Joint Staff said here. In a Jan. 17 interview, Army Lt. Gen. Douglas E. Lute cited Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's Middle East mission as an important part of the equation. ... Equally important is an initiative to embed groups of interagency civilians with brigades at combat level, Lute said.

"(Brigades) will receive the injection of a State Department expert, an economics expert, a law and order expert," Lute said. "They will physically join the brigade team." <More at: [www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2760](http://www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2760)>

## **BUT CAN THEY CATCH UP?**

### **GATES CALLS FOR 92,000 MORE SOLDIERS, MARINES**

Jim Garamone - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11, 2007 – The active-duty Army and Marine Corps will grow by 92,000 personnel over the next five years, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said during a White House news conference today.

"The President announced last night that he would strengthen our military for the long war against terrorism by authorizing an increase in the overall strength of the Army and Marine Corps," Gates said. "I am recommending to him a total increase in the two services of 92,000 soldiers and Marines over the next five years."

... "We should recognize that while it may take some time for these new troops to become available for deployment, it is important that our men and women in uniform know that additional manpower and resources are on the way," Gates said. <More at: [www.defenselink.mil/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2651](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2651)>

**AS IF THEY DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH TO DO ALREADY!  
MILITARY EXPANDS INTELLIGENCE ROLE IN U.S.**

Eric Lichtblau and Mark Mazzetti - January 14, 2007

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13 — The Pentagon has been using a little-known power to obtain banking and credit records of hundreds of Americans and others suspected of terrorism or espionage inside the United States, part of an aggressive expansion by the military into domestic intelligence gathering.

<More at: <http://amch.questionmarket.com/jsc/jsc.html?s=3881&c=0&v=0&lt=1169171012>>

**OF COURSE, THEY MAY NEED MORE NEW RECRUITS ANYWAY  
PENTAGON MEMO PREDICTS 10,000 OR MORE AMERICAN SOLDIERS COULD DIE  
IN IRAQ BY 2008**

January 12, 2007

Pentagon planners this week warned President George W. Bush that his "troop surge" plan could double U.S. casualties in Iraq in the coming year and result in 10,000 or more American deaths by the end of 2008. In a classified assessment memo, military experts predicted violence against U.S. troops will increase "at a sustained pace" and concluded that increasing the use of soldiers for house to house searches in Baghdad will "dramatically alter" the "ratio of casualties to actions" in that civil-war torn city, says a military source familiar with the memo.

The Pentagon report admitted battle weary soldiers are more prone to mistakes that lead to casualties and noted that military personnel sent to Iraq for third and possibly fourth tours increase the odds that those soldiers will become casualties of war. The memo concluded that American military deaths could top 6,000 by the end of 2007 and exceed 10,000 or more in 2008 with more than 100,000 wounded and/or maimed for life.

In an appearance before the Senate Armed Services committee Thursday, Secretary of State Rice refused to provide an estimate of U.S. casualties, saying such estimates are not possible but the Pentagon assessment had been delivered to the White House on Tuesday, two days before her testimony.

<More at: [www.capitolhillblue.com/news2/2007/01/pentagon\\_memo\\_p.html](http://www.capitolhillblue.com/news2/2007/01/pentagon_memo_p.html)>

**TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS**

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
1/27	1000 - 1700	Santa Barbara, CA	VUFT Inc Board Meeting	<a href="#">Bob Handy</a>	805-962-9082
1/27	1100 - 1300	National Mall Between 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> Streets	Assembly, Rally & March	Veterans for Peace	
1/27	1200	9 <sup>th</sup> & Figueroa, Los Angeles	Rally & March	Valley Grassroots for Democracy	(323) 691-5238
1/27		Palafox & Garden, Pensacola, FL	Peace Rally	Veterans for Peace	(850) 437-1323
1/28	0900 - 1630	Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School 4301 East-West Hwy Bethesda MD	Organizing, training, and workshops	Veterans for Peace & Military Families Speak Out	
2/8	1000-1400	San Diego Naval Base San Diego, CA	Job Fair		
2/8		Eugene, OR	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Dan Rupe</a>	541-345-5395
2/19	1100 - 1500	Doubletree Hotel 300 Army Navy DriveArlington, VA	Career Fair	<a href="#">Register</a>	703-416-4100

**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**

### **WHY DO THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR OIL COMPANY SUBSIDIES NOT ALSO FIGHT AGAINST THIS OBSCENITY?**

#### **HIGHER TRICARE FEES SOUGHT**

Tom Philpott - January 19, 2007

##### **Plan to Raise Retiree TRICARE Fees Ready for Relaunch**

Senior Defense officials have renewed their call to raise TRICARE enrollment fees and co-payments for under-65 military retirees and their dependents. Officials are warning anew that unless the cost of military health care is "re-balanced," so the beneficiary pays more and the government less, the prized lifetime benefit, arguably the best in the country, "cannot be sustained" over time.

Defense officials said they briefed key lawmakers on the planned fee increases back in 2005 and most seemed to agree they were needed. But in early 2006, an election year, lawmakers bolted like cats from a sprinkler after the Pentagon's "Sustain the Benefit" plan officially was unveiled.

This year, Defense officials hope that, at a minimum, their call for higher TRICARE fees will win the endorsement of a new study group, the Task Force on the Future of Military Healthcare. The 14-member panel was created by Congress, but its members were appointed by the same officials pressing for fee increases.

Half of the task force already works for the Department of Defense, being senior military officers or civilian executives. Congress gave them a broad range of issues to exam. But at their first public hearing Jan. 16, Dr. David Chu, under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, told the task force that the "elephant in the room" it needs to address "is the structure of benefits."

Ideally, DoD wants the task force to endorse higher TRICARE fees for 3.1 million beneficiaries in an interim report to Congress due in May, presumably early enough for legislative action this year when no lawmaker stands for reelection.

<More at: [www.military.com/features/0,15240,122368,00.html](http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,122368,00.html)>

#### **MILITARY FACES MENTAL CRISIS**

USA Today - January 17, 2007

An experienced Navy psychologist warns that the U.S. military does not have enough mental health professionals to meet the growing number of emotionally damaged war veterans.

Moreover, Navy Cmdr. Mark Russell says, many of the mental health professionals on staff lack formal training in core therapies for post-traumatic stress syndrome. Russell predicts a "perfect storm" of dire health care consequences.

From his distant vantage point treating Marines at a base in Iwakuni, Japan, Russell, 46, has been speaking out for three years that the U.S. military faces a mental health crisis in the treatment of its combat veterans.

He has fired off memos to higher command and has gone public with his views, an unusual step for many in the military. Russell discussed his concerns in phone and Internet interviews.

"We cannot provide the standard of care to treat PTSD via psychotherapy when we can barely keep up with new referrals and have to manage crises while filling in for the staffing gaps and vacancies due to deployment, attrition or no billeting," Russell says. "This is why I have been so outspoken." <More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,122282,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,122282,00.html)>

#### **SOURCES SAY CASE WORKERS FOR WOUNDED LAID OFF**

Karen Jowers - Staff writer - Jan 20, 2007

Defense Department officials have laid off most of their case workers who help severely injured service members, sources said.

The case workers for the Military Severely Injured Center serve as advocates for wounded service members who have questions or issues related to benefits, financial resources and their successful return to duty or reintegration into civilian life — all forms of support other than medical care.

The center officially opened in February 2005, with its primary offices in Arlington, Va., but also hired advocates at hospitals around the country.

Four sources said the decision was made to cut back the personnel because officials with the Army's Wounded Warrior program felt the Defense Department program was a duplication of efforts.

Defense officials did not comment on the actions as of Jan. 19. Wounded Warrior officials also could not be reached.

Reports indicate that Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Lewis, Wash.; and Fort Campbell, Ky., were among the locations that had case workers cut. It is not clear what will happen to case workers at the Arlington center.

The only case workers that have not been laid off are at three hospitals: Brooke Army Medical Center, Texas; Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii; and Naval Medical Center San Diego, sources said. But those case workers will not be allowed to work with soldiers and must refer them to the Army Wounded Warrior program. The laid-off workers were told Wednesday to finish up their case work with severely injured troops, and that Friday would be their last day.

<More at: [www.armytimes.com/news/2007/01/tnsWounded070119/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2007/01/tnsWounded070119/)>

## **'SURGE' EXTENDS MINNESOTA GUARD UNIT'S IRAQ TOUR**

Sgt. Jim Greenhill, USA - Special to American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11, 2007 – At least 4,000 National Guard citizen-soldiers may spend an extra four months in Iraq as part of the president's troop increase announced yesterday.

The Minnesota Army National Guard's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division, will have its Iraq tour extended up to 125 days, the Defense Department announced today.

The announcement affects about 3,000 Minnesota Guard members. The extension until August also affects more than 1,000 Guard members from Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, North Carolina, Nebraska and other states who are deployed with the 1st Brigade. In all, about 4,000 Guard members are affected, Army Lt. Col. Kevin Olson, public affairs officer for the Minnesota National Guard, said.

"The 1st Brigade, which consists of the Minnesota National Guard and a number of other National Guard units, were selected because of their agility and their ability to get the job done right," Olson said. "Our citizen-soldiers are perfectly magnificent."

<More at: [www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2671](http://www.defenselink.mil/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=2671)>

## **THE BACKDOOR DRAFT**

Bob Sommer - January 23, 2007

My wife and I hear little from our son, who has been fighting in the mountains of Afghanistan for the past year. A handful of e-mails and a few phone calls. The calls come in the middle of the night. We're groggy, trying to will ourselves awake, while his voice crackles and we miss words and phrases in the fragile satellite connection, and we all try to hold on to the few moments we have together.

It was disturbing recently to hear on such a call that, as if the fire fights and harsh conditions aren't enough to consume him, he is worried about a buddy with whom he served a tough twelve months in Iraq in 2004. His friend left the Army after that tour. He was finally getting his life back with a job and school when he was recalled to service through the Bush administration's backdoor draft, the Individual Ready Reserves. Our son worries that he too may be sent to back Iraq, after serving one tour there and another in Afghanistan-and after he planned to leave the Army. He would fall under that other backdoor draft known as Stop-Loss.

These are two ways our country meets its vast military entanglements-the Individual Ready Reserves and Stop-Loss. My son's friend comes under the first, and my son under the second. In theory, their obligations may be endless. According to Section 9c of the Army contract, "In the event of war, my enlistment in the Armed Forces continues until six months after the war ends, unless my enlistment is ended sooner by the President of the United States." The final clause is just a bad joke under the current administration. <More at: [www.opednews.com/articles/opedne\\_bob\\_somm\\_070122\\_the\\_backdoor\\_draft.htm](http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne_bob_somm_070122_the_backdoor_draft.htm)>

## **5 YEARS OF POST-SERVICE HEALTH CARE PROPOSED**

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Jan 24, 2007

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman laid down a big marker Monday, introducing a bill that would provide five years of post-service health care coverage for combat veterans instead of the current two.

Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., who became chairman in early January when Democrats took control of Congress, is not the first lawmaker to propose five years of post-service health care coverage without the need for a formal service-connected disability rating. But the fact that he is the veterans' committee chairman and is sponsoring a bill that would apply for current combat operations and any future hostilities makes this an issue the Bush administration will have to face. <More at:

[www.armytimes.com/news/2007/01/tnsFilner070123/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2007/01/tnsFilner070123/)>



## NEW MILITARY COMMISSIONS MANUAL ALLOWS CONVICTIONS ON HEARSAY, COERCED EVIDENCE

Joshua Pantesco - January 18, 2007

Terror detainees may be convicted solely on hearsay or coerced evidence and defendants may not present classified evidence unless the government approves its use, according to the [Manual for Military Commissions](#), released by the US Defense Department Thursday. The manual describes the procedures to govern upcoming detainee trials under the Military Commissions Act of 2006 (MCA).

President George W. Bush signed the Military Commissions Act in October after the US Congress approved the bill in late September. The law became necessary after the US Supreme Court ruled last June that the commissions, as initially constituted by the president, lacked proper legal authorization. ... Under the MCA, the president is authorized to establish military commissions to try unlawful enemy combatants. The commissions are authorized to sentence defendants to death, and defendants are precluded from invoking the Geneva Conventions as a source of rights during commission proceedings. The law also allows hearsay evidence to be admitted during proceedings, so long as the presiding officer determines it to be reliable. <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/paperchase/2007/01/new-military-commissions-manual-allows.php>

## **TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS**

### **WE FIND NEW WAYS TO HONOR OUR TROOPS ON THE HOME FRONT TEENS KILL IRAQ VET FOR \$5K**

Associated Press - January 24, 2007

DETROIT - Three teenage relatives have been charged in the death of an Iraq War veteran who was gunned down and robbed shortly after cashing a tax refund check for more than \$5,000. ... Terron Bush had a fiancée and a 4-month-old daughter. He served aboard a Navy aircraft carrier during the war in Iraq. <More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,123198,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,123198,00.html)>

### **NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF JANUARY 24, 2007**

This week, the Air Force and Navy announced an increase, while the Army, Marine Corps and Coast Guard had a decrease. The net collective result is 221 fewer reservists mobilized than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 74,688; Navy Reserve, 5,269; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,573; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,505; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 309. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 91,344, 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/Jan2007/d20070124nqr.pdf>

### **..OIF/OEF – HACK DATE THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 2007**

#### OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,065
WOUNDED US	23,114
OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 1/10]	≥24,823
KILLED UK	130
KILLED OTHER COALITION	123
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	750
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 12/16]	667
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 42,000
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 60,098 [LANCET-704,087]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+[LANCET- 1,267,357]

#### OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	357
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 12/2]	5,994
KILLED COALITION	220
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	660
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	32,034

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

\* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to <http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

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

## AFTERTHOUGHTS

### IRAQ VETERANS MEMORIAL

[Gold Star Families Speak Out](#) · [Military Families Speak Out](#) · [Iraq Veterans Against the War](#) · [North Texas Vets](#) · [Veterans for Peace](#) · [Soldiers of Today and Yesterday](#) · [GI Special](#) · [United for Peace and Justice](#) · [Brave New Foundation](#)

Inspired by the AIDS Quilt, the Vietnam memorial, and the New York Times biographies of the 9/11 victims, Robert Greenwald and Brave New Foundation, in partnership with numerous Iraq veterans groups, are creating a living online memorial to U.S. soldiers killed during the Iraq war. The Iraq Veterans Memorial will bear witness with the video testimonies of family, friends, co-workers, and military colleagues of those lost.

It will be unveiled on March 19th, 2007 all across the internet. [Contribute your video testimonial](#) | [Host video memorial on your site March 19th](#) A project of the [Brave New Foundation](#) / Email: [info@iraqmemorial.org](mailto:info@iraqmemorial.org)

### **FINALLY ~ SINCE THE PENTAGON DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING ELSE ON ITS PLATE AIR FORCE MAY PUNISH SERGEANT WHO POSED NUDE**

January 12, 2007

An Air Force staff sergeant who posed nude for Playboy magazine has been relieved of her duties while the military investigates, officials said Thursday.

In February's issue, hitting newsstands this week, Michelle Manhart is photographed in uniform yelling and holding weapons under the headline "Tough Love." The following pages show her partially clothed, wearing her dog tags while working out, as well as completely nude.

"This staff sergeant's alleged action does not meet the high standards we expect of our airmen, nor does it comply with the Air Force's core values of integrity, service before self, and excellence in all we do," Oscar Balladares, spokesman for Lackland Air Force Base, said in a statement.

Manhart told Playboy that she considers herself as standing up for her rights.

"Of what I did, nothing is wrong, so I didn't anticipate anything, of course," Manhart, 30, told The Associated Press. "I didn't do anything wrong, so I didn't think it would be a major issue."

Manhart, who is married with two children, joined the Air Force in 1994, spending time in Kuwait in 2002. She trains airmen at Lackland.

[http://www.capitolhillblue.com/news2/2007/01/air\\_force\\_may\\_p.html](http://www.capitolhillblue.com/news2/2007/01/air_force_may_p.html)



Sgt. Michelle Manhart (AP Photo)

**NOTICE**

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

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with the effect of Legislative or Executive inaction or bad actions that adversely affect our target group. I try not to pick those articles that have already been beaten to death in the regular press, but rather try to bring the reader articles that he or she might not run across in another medium. While we are non-partisan, I do not believe articles critical of government actions to be partisan as long as they are accurate and fair. Criticism, like dissent, is fair. Finally, I screen hundreds of articles for inclusions and for every article I include, I throw five or six away – good articles, but not as important as the ones selected.  
  
I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. [Sandy Cook](#), Editor

## ADD-ON ~ A GOOD ARTICLE ON OUR THEME

### TAKING CARE OF VETERANS

Donna Teresa - Homefront Journal - Jan. 16, 2007

As I listened to President Bush's new plan to deploy additional troops to Iraq, concerns and questions plagued my mind.

I heard nothing in this new strategy about veteran benefits and health care for those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Is the Veterans Administration across the country prepared to handle the hundreds of thousands of veterans when they eventually come home? Are they prepared to handle the potential tidal wave of PTSD mental illnesses?

In addition, the VA system must continue to provide health care and other services to disabled and seriously wounded veterans already home and in need of continuous treatment. This does not take into account the services needed for older veterans from previous wars? As dollars are needed to pay for this ongoing war, will veteran benefits be immune from future budget cuts from this Congress?

In speaking with local veterans in my community, I hear the same concerns time and again. Do they not deserve to utilize local medical or emergency services when they get sick, especially if they live far away from the nearest VA clinic?

Unless the need is service-related, they cannot go to the nearest emergency room. Hospitals are also over-loaded with patients insured and uninsured. Veterans must travel sometimes 100 to 200 miles to the nearest VA hospital by van for medical attention.

Ask yourself this question: if you were very ill, would you like to climb aboard a veterans transportation van, take a long ride, wait for your appointment, go to your appointment, and wait all day at the hospital for your van mates to finish their appointments, and take another long ride home? I think not.

But, many do it because they financially have no other choice or transportation. While ideas of universal health care are being debated, our veterans deserve to be included in the recipient list. They deserve a choice of health care. Have they not earned it?

Joshua Amaya, son of Raul Thomas Amaya, a Navy Vietnam veteran, who served in the reserves in 1967-1968 and active duty in 1969-1970, who recently died, experienced some of the consequences of this war.

Josh and his family were having trouble getting confirmation that a color guard and American flag would be available to honor his father at this funeral. He was told that during wartime, this service cannot be promised due to unavailability of personnel due to deployment in war and extremely full schedules covering other military funerals.

Amaya said the reasons were not acceptable. "(A)t first I understood, and then I thought about it," he said. "Why was my dad's service or anyone else's service less deserving of a military memorial service and a flag? This president asks for billions of dollars to continue this war, but... I couldn't get my dad an American flag for his funeral. He enlisted to defend our country just as those serving now are doing.

"My dad was there for his country, was it too much to ask that they be there for him? Will the support of our uniformed men and women stop when the war ends? These are the last acts of thanks to our veterans of all wars. Our country claims to care, but actions sometimes speaks louder than words."

The local American Legion came to Josh's rescue and his dad received the military funeral he deserved.

Military families need to be educated and re-educated about services such as military funerals. As the years go on, many families are left not knowing how to plan for such an important day. All funeral homes have the procedures for contacting the military for an honor guard and flag request.

2007 will bring many changes to our country and especially to our newest veterans. They deserve to come home with the knowledge that America has not forgotten about their service, even after a war is over.

Our veterans are a humble group of individuals who give so much and ask for so little. A war is a package deal. A country that involves itself in war must take care of those who fight them, before, during and after. Let us leave no veteran behind.

Homefront Journal Donna Teresa addresses lack of increase in veterans benefits in the latest strategy in war on terror, in her online column at [montereyherald.com](http://montereyherald.com).

Donna Teresa can be reached at [donnateresa@sbcglobal.net](mailto:donnateresa@sbcglobal.net).

<http://www.montereyherald.com/mld/montereyherald/news/local/16470086.htm>