

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 12

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

10 FEBRUARY 2007

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

YOU CAN'T HAVE IT BOTH WAYS!

George Washington said, "When we assumed the Soldier, we did not lay aside the Citizen." But the difference between a professional military and a citizen's army are profound, and each makes its own demands on the nation.

The professional military requires the commitment by the soldier of a significant portion of a lifetime to the study of arms, and to the pursuit, at all costs, of national purpose when arms are called upon to effect that purpose. Having a professional military demands of the taxpayers that they pay for the services – all of them – that their hired professionals require.

The citizens army counts on a small cadre of professionals to maintain the training and leadership base, and requires of all citizens a commitment to some small portion of their lives to service. Through both taxes and through voluntary associations they bear the burden of the survivors.

The suspension of the draft in 1973 defined the armed force pretty much for all time. The American people didn't want a citizens' army – they wanted a professional army, calling it "All-Volunteer" so that it didn't sound so "professional".

All administrations have left much of the long-term help for the wounded and disabled soldiers to volunteers. By doing so they have it both ways. They get the professional army they want, and they don't have to pay the full price. They go so far as to re-direct veterans to voluntary organizations for assistance, instead of expanding the formal organizations such as the VA to handle the cost. They short-change the formal organizations, and appeal to the patriotism of the citizenry to support the veterans. Instead of buying the wheelchair or the prosthetic, they praise the volunteers who sacrifice to do the government's job, and then take credit for inspiring that volunteerism to cover their own failures.

Those volunteers are disappearing. The large organizations, peopled by WWII, Korea, and Vietnam war veterans are getting smaller and smaller as fewer people join. Smaller, community-based organizations seem to thrive only when local personnel serve: without that local involvement they tend to die out.

As the true citizen army moves further into the past, so also does the willingness of ordinary citizens to volunteer to help the veteran. Citizens who had already served felt a camaraderie for those who also served. Very few citizens serve these days; very few are capable of understanding exactly what price the veteran pays.

Young citizens who were to face the draft grew up considering when and how they would fulfill their commitment, so they and their families were aware of the veteran and the veteran's needs. They too had a good chance of having those same needs.

We need to get things back on track. We need to tell everyone that they cannot have it both ways. If you want a professional force, pay the price. If you don't want to pay the price, restart the draft.

With a professional army, the moment that a soldier takes the oath the government must be committed to continuing care for a lifetime. The professional soldier gives up almost all other possibilities for personal advancement, and most possibilities for personal wealth. They also give up some of their rights as citizens. In exchange they should receive good pay, full medical benefits for life, and a respectable pension.

Maybe we should collect a separate sum from each taxpayer that is their portion of the costs of both war and the maintenance of a professional war-making force. The current war is costing \$250M a day; each taxpayer could receive a separate bill for war expenses of \$300 per family member. The taxpayer could then receive another separate bill for the maintenance of the armed force. At \$481B for 2008 that would be \$1,600 more for each family member as a continuing cost. The bill could be delivered by a disabled veteran.

The services are sending many veterans back into public life with long-term problems, but doing it in such a way that they do not retain responsibility for them. "Let the volunteers take care of it." Or, "Let the VA take care of it." But, the government is under-funding the VA and the volunteers are disappearing. "Oh well. Next problem?"

There are not enough volunteers to handle the problems we are growing daily, and veterans are falling farther behind on the scale of interest of the American people. As an example, at justgive.org, which advertises itself as a gateway to 1,000,000 charities, there isn't even a category for veterans.

It is past time for America to pay the complete price for having the military force it wants.

It is also well past time to decide what sort of foreign policy we will have and what the size, scope and mission of the force called for in that policy is.

But that's another story.[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.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

BOARD MEETING The new board elected officers and took up the discussion on the Strategic Plan for VUFT, Inc. at their meeting on 27 January 2007 in Santa Barbara. Strategic Planning is continuing and we will develop our Operating Plan for 2007-08 and the initial stages of our Program Plans during the next several months. We will lay out those plans for members in each issue of ***SOUND OFF!***

BOARD MEMBERS

Chair:	Bob Handy
Vice Chair:	Sandy Cook
Secretary:	Harlan Hobgood
Treasurer:	Russ Weed
Member-at-large:	Jim Cook
Member-at-large:	Ron Dexter
Member-at-large:	George Giacoppe
Member-at-large:	Don Katz
Member-at-large:	Tom Mullens
Member-at-large:	Thom O'Shaughnessy
Member-at-large:	Ric Schroeder

COMMITTEE CHAIRS –

Standing Committees

Programs Committee ~ TBD
Legislative Action Committee ~ TBD
Development Committee ~ TBD
Finance Committee ~ Russ Weed
Communications Committee ~ TBD
Membership Committee ~ Louise Giacoppe

Ad Hoc Committees

Name Committee ~ Thom O'Shaughnessy

The board adopted a vision statement for the organization that reflects where we intend to be in 4-5 years.

The vision of Veterans United For Truth, Inc. in 4-5 year's time is:

Veterans United For Truth, Inc. (VUFT) will be well-established in at least 10 states, with potential expansion under way in at least 10 others. The organization will have working volunteer groups in each defined region of those states, actively providing support to veterans and their families. There will be a paid Executive Director with a small national staff, the purpose of which is to assist state and local groups in organizing, fundraising, and establishing working support programs for veterans and their families.. Significant VUFT-sponsored legislation will have been passed in at least five of those states, and continuing legislation efforts will be in progress in all. VUFT will have raised sufficient money to establish aid funds in each of the active states. VUFT will be recognized as a national Veterans Support Organization and will have applied for a Congressional charter.

We are working on designing our service program(s) and will complete our Mission Statement when those plans come together. Stay tuned.

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

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

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

No letters this issue

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

28 FEDERAL BILLS IN THE FIRST FIVE WEEKS. SEE "ADD-ON" AT THE END OF THIS ISSUE FOR A BRIEF ON THE CURRENT BILLS.

CONGRESS SHORT ON MILITARY EXPERIENCE

Richmond Times-Dispatch - February 06, 2007

As Congress debates the war in Iraq, the Senate and House are short on military experience. Only 29 of 100 senators and 23 percent of House members today have worn a uniform -- the lowest percentages since World War II, a review by Media General News Service found. . . . "The lack of veterans in Congress has resulted in an insensitivity to the burdens placed on troops and their families by the war and frequent deployments," said Steve Strobbridge, director of government relations for Military Officers Association of America. "One percent of the population is bearing 100 percent of the burden of the war," he said.

<More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,124180,00.html>

RETREAT – NEWS

PACE: NOT ENOUGH EQUIPMENT FOR SURGE

February 6, 2007

U.S. Marine Gen. Peter Pace admitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee Tuesday equipment will be a problem when U.S. forces in Iraq are increased. During testimony over the \$481.4 billion fiscal 2008 defense budget, Pace said the military has about 41,000 armored vehicles in Iraq -- fewer than will be needed "to cover all of the troops that are deploying." Pace said it will be July before enough equipment is in place.

"The commanders on the ground have talked with the chief of staff of the Army and the commandant of the Marine Corps and have agreed that they will be able to share the assets on the ground so that no soldier or Marine will leave the compound without proper protection," Pace said when asked why more troops should be deployed immediately. **HOT-BEDDING AS POLICY?**
www.upi.com/NewsTrack/Top_News/20070206-023207-5140r

U.S. TROOPS STILL SHORT ON GEAR

Associated Press - January 31, 2007

WASHINGTON - Hundreds of U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have experienced shortages of key protective equipment including armored vehicles, roadside-bomb countermeasures and communications gear, a Pentagon survey released Tuesday shows. The Defense Department Inspector General's Office polled roughly 1,100 service members and found they weren't always adequately equipped for their missions. The troops were interviewed in Iraq and Afghanistan last May and June.

<More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,123727,00.html>

MOBILIZATIONS - ROUND TWO

Tom Philpott - January 27, 2007

Hundreds of thousands of National Guard and Reserve members previously mobilized for tours in Iraq and Afghanistan are exposed anew to involuntary call-up under a policy change unveiled with President Bush's plan to "surge" forces into Baghdad. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said he has rescinded a rule, set in 2002, that barred involuntary mobilization of reserve personnel beyond a "cumulative" 24-month ceiling for a wartime emergency. But Gates also softened the effect of that decision by capping future involuntary mobilizations at 12 months apiece, including training time. This replaces what has been routine 16-to-24-month mobilizations for most Guard or Reserve members including a year "boots on the ground" in Iraq or Afghanistan. The now shelved 24-month "cumulative" rule had been in effect five years, long enough that some Guard and Reserve members, and their families, might have believed it protected against a second call-up. The reality is that most soldiers, having served once in theater, knew that this was going to be a long war and that at some point we were going to have to come back to them," Nuttall told Military Update. <More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,123337,00.html>

SOLDIERS IN IRAQ VIEW TROOP SURGE AS A LOST CAUSE

Tom Lasseter - McClatchy Newspapers - Feb. 03, 2007

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Army 1st Lt. Antonio Hardy took a slow look around the east Baghdad neighborhood that he and his men were patrolling. He grimaced at the sound of gunshots in the distance. A machine gunner on top of a Humvee scanned the rooftops for snipers. Some of Hardy's men wondered aloud if they'd get hit by a roadside bomb on the way back to their base.

"To be honest, it's going to be like this for a long time to come, no matter what we do," said Hardy, 25, of Atlanta. "I think some people in America don't want to know about all this violence, about all the killings. The people back home are shielded from it; they get it sugar-coated."

While senior military officials and the Bush administration say the president's decision to send more American troops to pacify Baghdad will succeed, many of the soldiers who're already there say it's a lost cause.

"What is victory supposed to look like? Every time we turn around and go in a new area there's somebody new waiting to kill us," said Sgt. 1st Class Herbert Gill, 29, of Pulaski, Tenn., as his Humvee rumbled down a dark Baghdad highway one evening last week. "Sunnis and Shiites have been fighting for thousands of years, and we're not going to change that overnight."

"Once more raids start happening, they'll (insurgents) melt away," said Gill, who serves with the 1st Infantry Division in east Baghdad. "And then two or three months later, when we leave and say it was a success, they'll come back."

Soldiers interviewed across east Baghdad, home to more than half the city's 8 million people, said the violence is so out of control that while a surge of 21,500 more American troops may momentarily suppress it, the notion that U.S. forces can bring lasting security to Iraq is misguided. More at: www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/16616389.htm>

MILITARY WANTS MORE CIVILIANS TO HELP IN IRAQ

Thom Shanker and David S. Cloud - February 7, 2007

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6 — Senior military officers, including members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have told President Bush and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates that the new Iraq strategy could fail unless more civilian agencies step forward quickly to carry out plans for reconstruction and political development.

The complaints reflect fresh tensions between the Pentagon and the State Department over personnel demands that have fallen most heavily on the military. But they also draw on a deeper reservoir of concerns among officers who have warned that a military buildup alone cannot solve Iraq's problems, and who now fear that the military will bear a disproportionate burden if Mr. Bush's strategy falls short. Among particular complaints, the officers cited a request from the office of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that military personnel temporarily fill more than one-third of 350 new State Department jobs in Iraq that are to be created under the new strategy. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2007/02/07/washington/07military.html>

"AS SOON AS YOU STOP CRYING I'LL STOP SPANKING YOU!"

U.S. THREATENS CRUSHING OFFENSIVE TO CALM BAGHDAD

The Washington Times - February 5, 2007 - From combined dispatches

BAGHDAD -- A U.S.-Iraqi offensive against militants in Baghdad will begin within days and take place on a scale never seen during four years of war, American officers said yesterday.

... Briefing a small group of foreign reporters, three American colonels who are senior advisers to the Iraqi army and police in Baghdad said a command center overseeing the crackdown in the capital would be activated today.

"The expectation is the plan will be implemented very soon thereafter," a senior adviser to the 9th Iraqi army division said at a U.S. military base in Baghdad.

"It's going to be an operation unlike anything this city has seen," Col. Doug Heckman added. "It's a multiple-order magnitude of difference, not just a 30 percent, I mean a couple hundred percent" larger than previous offensives.

<More at: www.washingtontimes.com/world/20070205-121631-1425r.htm>

HOW THE US SENT \$12BN IN CASH TO IRAQ. AND WATCHED IT VANISH

David Pallister - February 8, 2007 - Guardian

Special flights brought in tonnes of banknotes which disappeared into the war zone

The US flew nearly \$12bn in shrink-wrapped \$100 bills into Iraq, then distributed the cash with no proper control over who was receiving it and how it was being spent. The staggering scale of the biggest transfer of cash in the history of the Federal Reserve has been graphically laid bare by a US congressional committee.

In the year after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 nearly 281 million notes, weighing 363 tonnes, were sent from New York to Baghdad for disbursement to Iraqi ministries and US contractors. Using C-130 planes, the deliveries took place once or twice a month with the biggest of \$2,401,600,000 on June 22 2004, six days before the handover.

... The minutes from a May 2004 CPA meeting reveal "a single disbursement of \$500m in security funding labelled merely 'TBD', meaning 'to be determined'." The memorandum concludes: "Many of the funds appear to have been lost to corruption and waste ...

thousands of 'ghost employees' were receiving pay cheques from Iraqi ministries under the CPA's control. Some of the funds could have enriched both criminals and insurgents fighting the United States."

According to Stuart Bowen, the special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction, the \$8.8bn funds to Iraqi ministries were disbursed "without assurance the monies were properly used or accounted for". But, according to the memorandum, "he now believes that the lack of accountability and transparency extended to the entire \$20bn expended by the CPA".

<More at: www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,2008189,00.html>

ARMY PROBES WAR CONTRACTOR FRAUD

John Heilprin - Associated Press Writer - Jan 27

From high-dollar fraud to conspiracy to bribery and bid rigging, Army investigators have opened up to 50 criminal probes involving battlefield contractors in the war in Iraq and the U.S. fight against terrorism, The Associated Press has learned. Senior contracting officials, government employees, residents of other countries and, in some cases, U.S. military personnel have been implicated in millions of dollars of fraud allegations.

"All of these involve operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait," Chris Grey, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, confirmed Saturday to the AP. "CID agents will pursue leads and the truth wherever it may take us," Grey said. "We take this very seriously."

Battlefield contractors have been implicated in allegations of fraud and abuse since the war in Iraq began in spring 2003. A special inspector general office that focused solely on reconstruction spending in Iraq developed cases that led to four criminal convictions. The problems stem in part from the Pentagon's struggle to get a handle on the unprecedented number of contractors now helping run the nation's wars. Contractors are used in battle zones to do nearly everything but fight. They run cafeterias and laundries for troops, move supplies, run communication systems and repair weapons systems.

<More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070128/ap_on_go_ot/war_fraud>

YOU'RE BAD, BAD BOYS! ~ YOU'VE BEEN CHEATING FOR FOUR YEARS. WE WILL PUNISH YOU BY WITHHOLDING 12/100ths OF 1% OF YOUR NO-BID CONTRACT! ~ SO THERE!

ARMY SAYS IT WILL WITHHOLD \$19.6 MILLION FROM HALLIBURTON, CITING POTENTIAL CONTRACT BREACH

Philip Shenon - NY Times - February 8, 2007

WASHINGTON, Feb. 7 — The Army announced during a House oversight committee hearing on Wednesday that it would withhold \$19.6 million from the Halliburton Company after recently discovering that the contractor had hired the company Blackwater USA to provide armed security guards in [Iraq](#), a potential breach of its government contract.

The Army has said that its contracts with Halliburton, which has a five-year, \$16 billion deal to support American military operations in Iraq, generally barred the company and its subcontractors from using private armed guards. But in a statement, Halliburton disagreed with the Army's interpretation and suggested that there was nothing to prohibit Halliburton's subcontractors from hiring such guards. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2007/02/08/washington/08waxman.html>

WATADA COURT-MARTIAL ENDS IN MISTRIAL

Scott Galindez and Geoffrey Millard - truthout - 07 February 2007

Fort Lewis, Washington - The court-martial of First Lt. Ehren Watada, a commissioned US Army officer who refused deployment to Iraq on the basis that he believed the war was illegal, has ended in a mistrial, a military court judge ruled Wednesday.

In a stunning defeat for military prosecutors, Lt. Col. John Head, the military judge presiding over Watada's court-martial, said he had no choice but to declare a mistrial because military prosecutors and Watada's defense attorney could not reach an agreement regarding the characterization of a stipulation agreement Watada signed before the start of his court-martial. The government characterizes the stipulation agreement as an admission of guilt by Watada for "missing movement" and making statements against the Iraq war that resulted in charges of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

<More at: www.truthout.org/docs_2006/020707Z.shtml>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
2/16		Florida State University Tallahassee	National Symposium on Combat Stress Injury	National Veterans Foundation	Todd A. Stenhouse 916.455.6640
2/19	1100 - 1500	Doubletree Hotel 300 Army Navy Drive Arlington, VA	Career Fair	Register	703-416-4100
3/5		Algonquin, IL	Resource Fair	Kathy Chwedyk	866-338-4968
3/12	1100 - 1500	Hyatt Regency Chicago 151 East Wacker Drive, Chicago	Career Fair	Register	312.565.1234

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

TESTER BLASTS VA: 'VETERANS ARE HURTING'

Noelle Straub - Lee Washington Bureau - 02/02/07

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., blasted the administration Thursday for trying to run the Department of Veterans Affairs “on the cheap” and said the VA delays treatments for veterans seeking health care long enough that they give up.

“I think this is very widespread and quite frankly it disturbs me a bunch that this country makes promises to people, sends them into war and then comes back and says, you know what, we’ll just string you out until you forget about it,” he said.

The lack of funding stems from the administration’s vision, he said. “I think that somebody said a while back they’ve been trying to do this war on the cheap, and I think they’re trying to do the VA on the cheap,” he said.

“Delay is denial,” he added. “Delay happens far more often than it should. They are running these folks around, and they’re running ‘em around because they don’t have enough money. And to top that off, they’re also burning out the personnel who are giving treatment.” ... “I don’t care what it says on the Web sites, I don’t care what folks in the administration are saying, there’s a lot of veterans out there who are hurting,” he said. “They’re waiting in line for health care and they shouldn’t be.”

<More at: www.helenair.com/articles/2007/02/02/montana/a07020207_01.txt>

SPECIAL REPORT FROM N. IRELAND ON U.S. COMBAT PTSD SUICIDES

January 17, 2007 A special report from Channel 4 News broadcast out of Belfast, Northern Ireland. View the full report online (mature audiences only, please): www.channel4.com/player/v2/player.jsp?showld=4300

THIS MARINE’S DEATH CAME AFTER HE SERVED IN IRAQ

Kevin Giles, Star Tribune January 26, 2007

When Jonathan Schulze came home from Iraq, he tried to live a normal life. But the war kept that from happening. At first, Jonathan Schulze tried to live with the nightmares and the grief he brought home from Iraq. He was a tough kid from central Minnesota, and more than that, a U.S. Marine to the core. Yet his moods when he returned home told another story. He sobbed on his parents' couch as he told them how fellow Marines had died, and how he, a machine gunner, had killed the enemy. In his sleep, he screamed the names of dead comrades. He had visited a psychiatrist at the VA hospital in Minneapolis. Two weeks ago, Schulze went to the VA hospital in St. Cloud. He told a staff member he was thinking of killing himself, and asked to be admitted to the mental health unit, said his father and stepmother, who accompanied him. They said he was told he couldn't be admitted that day. The next day, as he spoke to a counselor in St. Cloud by phone, he was told he was No. 26 on the waiting list, his parents said.

Four days later, Schulze, 25, committed suicide in his New Prague home.

<More at: www.startribune.com/462/story/963363.html>

HANDLING OF MARINE’S CASE TO BE INVESTIGATED

Kevin Giles, Star Tribune January 31, 2007

A team of federal investigators will arrive Thursday at VA medical centers in Minneapolis and St. Cloud to look into family claims that U.S. Marine veteran Jonathan J. Schulze was denied a bed for psychiatric care days before he committed suicide last month.

The Office of the Medical Inspector at the Veterans Affairs central office in Washington will conduct the investigation, said Joan Vincent, public affairs officer at the VA Medical Center in St. Cloud. <More at: www.startribune.com/462/story/972840.html>

VA BUDGET PROPOSAL STILL BILLIONS SHORT, DISENFRANCHISES THOUSANDS OF VETERANS

08 Feb 2007 17:07:00 - Vietnam Veterans of America – Press Release

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- "We recognize that the budget recommendation VVA is making this year -- an increase of \$6.9 billion over the expected fiscal year 2007 appropriation for veterans' health care -- is extraordinary," John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America said in testimony before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs this morning.

"But with troops in the field, years of under-funding of health care organizational capacity, renovation of an archaic and dilapidated infrastructure, updating capital equipment, continued underestimation of usage by veterans, particularly returnees from Iraq and Afghanistan, and several cohorts of war veterans reaching ages of peak health care utilization, these are extraordinary times," Rowan said. "It's past time to meet these needs.

"The \$2 billion increase the Administration has requested for medical care may almost keep pace with medical inflation," Rowan said in testimony submitted for the record. "But it will not allow VA to enhance its health care or mental health care services for returning veterans, restore diminished staff in key disciplines, restore needed long-term care programs for aging veterans, or allow working-class veterans to return to their health care system.

<More at: www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/news_press_release.57858.shtml>

PLEASE SEE "AFTERTHOUGHTS"

DECORATED AIR FORCE RESERVE NURSE SUES SUTTER HEALTH FOR FIRING HER AFTER DEPLOYMENT TO IRAQ

Major California Hospital Network Violated Federal and State Employment Laws, Suit Charges

[SAN FRANCISCO, January 23, 2007] Lieutenant Colonel Debra Muhl has served with distinction in the United States Air Force for more than 30 years, saving the lives of American soldiers in combat zones in Somalia, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. For her valor, she has received more than 20 medals – but she never expected what she received from her civilian employer, the northern California-based health giant, Sutter Health, when she told them that she was being deployed to Iraq: a pink slip.

Today, Lt. Col. Muhl filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, charging that Sutter Health violated the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, a law specifically passed by Congress to protect the civilian jobs of members of the Reserves and National Guard. Lt. Col. Muhl is represented by attorney David A. Lowe, a Partner of the San Francisco-based law firm Rudy, Exelrod & Zieff.

"Lt. Col. Debra Muhl is a war hero," said attorney Lowe. "She has been honored with three Meritorious Service Medals, an Air Medal for flying combat missions, three Commendation Medals and other awards." She is no less accomplished in her civilian life: she was the administrative director of the Sutter Health's Joint Cardiac Program where she received outstanding performance evaluations. "The USERRA, as well as the California Military and Veterans Code, exist precisely to protect the civilian jobs of dedicated public servants like Lt. Col. Muhl, who selflessly answered the call to serve in our country's military reserves," said Lowe. "Yet Sutter Health ignored its obligations under those laws and fired Lt. Col. Muhl after she served for four months at Balad Air Base in Iraq." <More at: <http://newswire.ascribe.org/cgi-bin/behold.pl?ascribeid=20070122.123615&time=10%2000%20PST&year=2007&public=0>>

"YOU'RE FIRED!" BUT THEY'LL GLADLY USE HER FOR THEIR PR PURPOSES

In the Sutter Health slick newsletter *Sutter Nurse: A Journal for Sutter Health Nurses*, Spring 2004 Issue, the cover story, "Sutter Health Applauds Our Nurses", subtitled on page 5, "Our Extraordinary Nurses Deliver Exceptional Care", one of the highlighted nurses was – Guess Who?

Debra Muhl, R.N., the administrative director of the joint cardiac programs at California Pacific Medical Center, Marin General Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital and Novato Community Hospital returned from duty in Iraq. Major Muhl, who has been an Air Force reservist for 22 years, was deployed to Kuwait where she served as chief nurse for 11 months.

Muhl is among the many nurses and physicians across our system extending their skill to help the people and medical community in countries such as Iraq.



NEW STUDY DOCUMENTS THE SELF-EMPLOYMENT RATE OF DISABLED VETERANS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26 - PRNewswire-USNewswire

Service-disabled veterans are self-employed at a rate significantly lower than the veteran population as a whole, according to a study released today by the Office of Advocacy of the U.S. Small Business Administration. The study indicates that the discrepancy is about 25 to 50 percent. ... For more information and a complete copy of the report, visit the Office of Advocacy website at www.sba.gov/advo. <More at: www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/01-26-2007/0004513907&EDATE>

SO, CONGRESSMAN, TELL ME! WHEN WILL THE "TIMING BE RIGHT"?

VETERANS HOME AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEAL DEAD

Ted Hayes – Bristol, RI

BRISTOL - A Warwick-based organization that provides housing for homeless and low-income veterans and their families has apparently abandoned a plan to build 10 affordable housing units at the Rhode Island Veterans Home on Metacom Avenue. Operation Stand Down, which as recently as November had received a \$1.5 million federal grant to help build the units, had faced opposition to its plan from state and local officials. The most notable was Rep. Raymond E. Gallison Jr., a member of a House of Representatives commission studying the veterans' home future and the head of a separate committee examining homeless veterans in Rhode Island.

Rep. Gallison confirmed Operation Stand Down's decision Monday, saying it was probably the right move for the veterans home at this time. "The timing just wasn't right," he said. <More at: www.eastbayri.com/story/302185210661543.php>

MILITARY TO CUT BACK ON 'STOP LOSS'

Associated Press | January 29, 2007

WASHINGTON - In an action branded a backdoor draft by some critics, the military over the past several years has held tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines on the job and in war zones beyond their retirement dates or enlistment length. It is a widely disliked practice that the Pentagon, under new Defense Secretary Robert Gates, is trying to figure out how to cut back on. Gates has ordered that the practice - known as "stop loss" - must "be minimized." At the same time, he is looking for ways to decrease the hardship for troops and their families, recruit more people for a larger military and reassess how the active duty and reserves are used.

"It's long overdue," said Jules Lobel, vice president of the Center for Constitutional Rights and lawyer for some in the military who have challenged the policy in court.

"It has created terrible problems of morale," Lobel said last week. "It has in some cases made Soldiers feel that they were duped or deceived in how they were recruited."

Gates has asked the chief of each service branch for a plan by the end of February on how they would rely less on stop loss. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,123574,00.html>>

MAYBE NOW HE CAN AFFORD HIS INCREASED TRICARE CO-PAYS

WWII VET WINS \$254M IN LOTTERY

Associated Press | January 30, 2007

CHESTERFIELD, Missouri - A World War II veteran and his family stepped forward Monday to claim a lottery jackpot worth more than a quarter-billion dollars, one of the largest single-ticket lottery prizes in U.S. history.

Jim Wilson II, 84, and his wife, Shirley, 79, claimed the winning prize from last Wednesday's drawing, along with their three sons.

"I was absolutely astonished," said Jim Wilson, a retired electrician who served in the Army's 82nd Airborne Division in Africa and Europe, at an afternoon news conference. "I couldn't believe it, and still don't."

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF FEBRUARY 7, 2007

This week, the Navy and Air Force announced an increase, while the Army, Marine Corps and Coast Guard had a decrease. The net collective result is 2,627 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 72,195; Navy Reserve, 5,550; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,657; Marine Corps

Reserve, 5,480; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 303. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 89,185, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2007/d20070207nqr.pdf

**THEY EVEN SPIN DEATH AND WOUNDING!
THE DOD'S OBSCURE DEFINITION OF 'CASUALTY'**

From the New York Times: February 02, 2007

For the last few months, anyone who consulted the Veterans Affairs Department's Web site to learn how many American troops had been wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan would have found this number: 50,508. But on Jan. 10, without explanation, the figure plummeted to 21,649.

Which number is correct? The answer depends on a larger question, the definition of wounded. If the term includes combat or "hostile" injuries inflicted by the enemy, the definition the Pentagon uses, the smaller number would be right.

But if it also applies to injuries from accidents like vehicle crashes and to mental and physical illnesses that developed in the war zone, the meaning that veterans' groups favor, 50,508 would be accurate.

The problem here is honestly reporting what is happening with our troops in a clear and understandable way to the American public. While the NYT cites the 'wounded' definition being the crux of the problem, I think it's the military definition for 'casualty' which needs greater inspection.

Most average people should not be expected to figure out for themselves that casualties reported by our Defense Department consist only of those who received "hostile" wounds in battle.

Most of us would think that anyone riding in a convoy in a war zone who gets severely wounded in an accident, or is incapacitated and unable to return to the combat zone due to PTSD, would be counted a casualty of war.

Not so -- even though the DoD's *own definition* for 'casualty' includes these injuries and more. From the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (last updated on January 5, 2007) [pdf]:

Casualty: Any person who is lost to the organization by reasons of having been declared dead, missing, captured, interned, wounded, injured, or seriously ill.

... Does the military think the American people just can't handle the truth? Or is it that they worry about exposing the lessons of war's true costs that honest casualty figures unflinchingly relate? <More at: www.nytimes.com/2007/01/30/us/30wound.html>

SO OUR NUMBERS CHANGE ~ BUT THEN, WE HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO GET THE TRUTH FROM THEM, HAVE WE?

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,118
WOUNDED US	23,417
OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 2/13]	≥32,544
KILLED UK	132
KILLED OTHER COALITION	124
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	750
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 2/13]	668
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 42,000
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 61,603 [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	161
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

SUPPORT THE SEVERELY WOUNDED

Jim Hightower February 6, 200

Two years ago, Pentagon chief Donnie Rumsfeld said, "I think we ought to put together a team to see that the [military] services take care of their troops after they're wounded, and when they return home and are discharged."

Golly... what a concept. You get injured in war, you get help back home. Yes, I'm for that. Aren't you? Why this took so long to start, I don't know. Bear in mind that Rummy was talking about a special effort for severely wounded troops – these with amputations, brain trauma, and such. So, the brass set up MSIC, the Military Severely Injured Center. Headquartered just outside Washington, MSIC's goal was both clear and proper: "Seamless support as long as it may take to ensure that injured service members and families achieve the highest level of functioning and quality of life."

The center placed "counselor advocates" in 19 hospital across the country to work with the wounded vets on everything from financial needs to family problems, offering 24/7 support. Way to go – that's what I call really supporting our troops!

But wait... what the blankety-blank is this? The Pentagon has just shut down MSIC! In January, dozens of these skilled special advocates were abruptly shown the door. Even in the few hospitals where the advocates were not laid off, they're being reassigned and are not allowed to work with the severely wounded. The Pentagon says that MSIC was a duplication of efforts, thus expendable. But, as the head of a troop support group says: "I'm just livid about this. [MSIC] did a fabulous job for these families... who are hanging by a thread... No other organization helped service members and their families like they did."

This is Jim Hightower saying... Ironically, this despicable cut-back came only days before George W's state-of-the-union speech, where he called on Americans to support our troops. We do George! Why don't you? <http://jimhightower.com/node/6038>

JUST COULDN'T RESIST COMMENTING

VA BUDGET REQUEST SEEKS \$87 BILLION

David Hubler

Published on Feb. 5, 2007 President Bush's fiscal 2008 budget request for the Department of Veterans Affairs calls for \$36.6 billion for discretionary veterans' medical care, an 83 percent increase since Bush took office in 2001, [AT WHICH TIME WE WERE AT WAR WITH NO ONE] according to the Office of Management and Budget. VA Secretary Jim Nicholson said the overall VA budget request seeks nearly \$87 billion for fiscal 2008, an increase of \$37.8 billion, or 77 percent, since 2001 [WHILE INJURIES AND DEATHS WENT FROM 0 TO WHAT?]. Health care and disability compensation for veterans would receive the majority of the proposed spending under the budget released today.

The request includes \$1.85 billion for information technology, a boost of \$782 million from the fiscal 2007 budget request. The VA received \$1.2 billion for IT in fiscal 2006. [APPARENTLY THIS WILL HELP THEM REPLACE SOME OF THOSE LAPTOPS THAT THEY KEEP LOSING]

Under the proposed budget, the VA said it would begin a new initiative [1,950 DAYS AFTER THE START OF OEF AND 1,421 DAYS AFTER THE START OF OIF WE HAVE A NEW INITIATIVE!] and to provide priority processing of claims for disability compensation from veterans of the war on terror [WHAT A CONCEPT!]. Among the IT goals is a further reduction in processing veterans' disability claims. According to OMB, the budget request would provide resources to shorten the time from 177 days in 2006 to 145 days in 2008. [SEE ABOVE – WOULD A 22-DAY REDUCTION HAVE HELPED JONATHAN SCHULZE?]

Nicholson also announced plans to create a special advisory committee to advise him on the full spectrum of issues that affect the VA and the veterans and families of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. [SECRETARY NICHOLSON WAS SWORN IN ON 1 FEBRUARY 2005 ~ AND NOW – 739 DAYS LATER - HE DECIDES HE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THIS STUFF! GOOD FOR YOU JIMMY-BOY! DON'T APPEAR OVER-ANXIOUS TO GET STARTED, NOW, YOU MIGHT SCARE SOMEONE.]

[BY THE WAY, JIMMY-BOY, DID ANY OF YOUR STAFF TELL YOU THAT THE 2007 BUDGET HASN'T BEEN PASSED YET, SO WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT A LONG TIME TO SEE THESE 2008 BUCKS BECOME REAL. BUT THAT'S OK. TAKE CREDIT FOR ALL THAT IS GOOD IN IT NOW BECAUSE THE MONEY PROBABLY WON'T SHOW UP UNTIL YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY OUT, THEN IT WON'T BE YOUR FAULT, WILL IT?]

[AND YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE YOUR PAPAL KNIGHTHOOD, AND THE MONEY YOU MADE AS A LAWYER AND DEVELOPER TO COMFORT YOU IN YOUR OLD AGE. TELL ME, THOUGH, HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT FORGETTING WHAT LIFE WAS REALLY LIKE WHEN YOU SERVED IN VIET NAM?]

<http://www.fcw.com/article97554-02-05-07-Web>

NOTICE

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

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

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

ADD-ON ~ VETS LEGISLATION TO DATE

1. Joseph I. Hoovzer Combat Veteran Affidavit Act of 2007 (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.653.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title 38, United States Code, to allow the sworn affidavit of a veteran who served in combat during the Korean War or an earlier conflict to be accepted as proof of service-connection of a disease or injury alleged to have been incurred or aggravated by such service.
2. Help Establish Access to Local Timely Healthcare for Your Vets (HEALTHY Vets) Act of 2007 (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.315.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts with community health care providers to improve access to health care for veterans in highly rural areas, and for other purposes.
3. Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.92.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. ["Timely" means within 30 days of filing the complaint you should see a doctor – maybe]
4. To establish the American Veterans Congressional Internship Program. (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.159.IH\]](#) ~ Each member may hire one veteran for 12 months who is honorably discharged from active or reserve duty.
5. Expressing support for the designation and goals of 'Hire a Veteran Week' and encouraging the President to issue a proclamation supporting those goals. (Introduced in House) [\[H.CON.RES.5.IH\]](#) ~ "Motherhood and Apple Pie" resolution
6. Disabled Veteran Small Business Eligibility Expansion Act of 2007 (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.109.IH\]](#) ~ To amend the Small Business Act to make service-disabled veterans eligible under the 8(a) business development program.
7. Veterans Outpatient Care Access Act of 2007 (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.339.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve access to medical services for veterans seeking treatment at Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinics with exceptionally long waiting periods. [If the vet has to wait 6 months or more, VA to send vet to outside care giver]
8. To amend title 38, United States Code, to reduce from age 57 to age 55 the age after which the remarriage of the surviving spouse of a deceased veteran shall not result in termination... (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.704.IH\]](#) ~ ...of dependency and indemnity compensation otherwise payable to that surviving spouse.
9. Veterans Outreach Improvement Act of 2007 (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.67.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. [Doesn't demand specific improvements, just "make it better"]
10. To require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide mental health services in languages other than English, as needed, for veterans with limited English proficiency, and for other... (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.542.IH\]](#) ~ [Self-explanatory]
11. Disabled Veteran Housing Simplification Act of 2007 (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.403.IH\]](#) ~ To amend section 12(c) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 to exempt residents of public housing who are determined by the Veterans Administration to be permanently and totally disabled from the requirement to perform community service.
12. Combat Military Medically Retired Veteran's Fairness Act (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.243.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the payment of Combat-Related Special Compensation to members of the Armed Forces retired for disability with less than 20 years of active military service who were awarded the Purple Heart.
13. To make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at a discount to certain veterans. (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.652.IH\]](#) ~ [\$10 per year for anyone discharged other than dishonorably]
14. Whereas the people of the United States have a sincere appreciation and respect for the military personnel who serve in the Armed Forces of the United States; (Engrossed as Agreed to or Passed by House) [\[H.CON.RES.5.EH\]](#) ~ "Motherhood and Apple Pie" resolution calling for designation of a "Hire a Vet" week
15. Lane Evans Veterans Health and Benefits Improvement Act of 2007 (Introduced in Senate) [\[S.117.IS\]](#) ~ To amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve benefits and services for members of the Armed Forces, veterans of the Global War on Terrorism, and other veterans, to require reports on the effects of the Global War on Terrorism, and for other purposes. [Comprehensive increase in eligibility period for mental health and medical support]
16. Honor Our Commitment to Veterans Act (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.463.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title 38, United States Code, to terminate the administrative freeze on the enrollment into the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs of veterans in the lowest priority category for enrollment (referred to as 'Priority 8').
17. Blind Veterans Fairness Act (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.649.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title XVI of the Social Security Act to provide that annuities paid by States to blind veterans shall be disregarded in determining supplemental security income benefits.
18. Home Ownership for America's Veterans Act of 2007 (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.551.IH\]](#) ~ To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with respect to the eligibility of veterans for mortgage bond financing, and for other purposes. [Increases eligibility to 25 years after completion of service, and indexes maximum mortgage amount]
19. Forgotten Veteran's Retirement Compensation Act (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.737.IH\]](#) ~ To correct an inequity in eligibility for military retired pay based on nonregular service in the case of certain members of the reserve components completing their reserve service before 1966.
20. Encouraging Work Act of 2007 (Introduced in Senate) [\[S.248.IS\]](#) ~ To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend and modify the work opportunity credit, and for other purposes. [Expands veterans' benefit]
21. Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2007 (Introduced in Senate) [\[S.439.IS\]](#) ~ To amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation.
22. Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007 (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.23.IH\]](#) ~ To amend title 46, United States Code, to provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States merchant marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II. [Provides "veteran" status, burial rights, and \$1,000/month pension for those eligible]
23. To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve compensation benefits for veterans in certain cases of impairment of vision involving both eyes, and for other purposes. (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.797.IH\]](#) ~ [Self-explanatory – eases "blindness" to "Impairment of vision beyond 20/200"]
24. Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act (Introduced in Senate) [\[S.479.IS\]](#) ~ "The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and implement a comprehensive program for reducing the incidence of suicide among veterans."
25. Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2007 (Introduced in Senate) [\[S.22.IS\]](#) ~ [New "GI Bill" for vets education]
26. Christopher and Dana Reeve Quality of Life for Persons with Paralysis Act (Introduced in House) [\[H.R.446.IH\]](#) ~ "Expansion and coordination of activities of the National Institutes of Health with respect to research on paralysis." [Includes VA activities]
27. Small Business and Work Opportunity Act of 2007 (Placed on Calendar in Senate) [\[S.349.PCS\]](#) ~ ["Tax Relief" and accounting changes for small businesses with special provisions for disabled veterans]
28. Resolved, That the bill from the House of Representatives (H.R. 2) entitled "An Act to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum... (Engrossed Amendment as Agreed to by Senate) [\[H.R.2.EAS\]](#) ~ [Minimum wage act with preferential treatment for veterans.]