

# SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 12

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

*“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”*

10 FEBRUARY 2008

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

### WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE WAR?

Last week, according to the Pew Research Center, national news media provided 2% of their coverage on the wars. They spent twice as much coverage on Heath Ledger, five times as much on the stimulus plan, and 20 times as much on the 2008 campaign.

When asked what they had heard about in the news lately, readers responded with Obama – 24%, Clinton – 23%, Ledger – 11%, Britney Spears – 6% and on down to Mitt Romney 3%. They did NOT MENTION THE IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN WARS!

Even when asked what they might be interested in reading or hearing about, only 6% mentioned the war.

No one anywhere mentioned the corollaries of war – the effect on veterans and their families, the provision of benefits and services, the reconstitution of the vastly depleted forces, both federal and state.

I spend hours daily reviewing news stories from all over the nation. It is getting harder and harder to find substantive news stories on the war or veterans. There are more stories on naming parks and post offices for dead veterans than there are on failing hospitals and programs for live veterans.

In Congress there are more unfunded provisions for veterans than there are funded ones, and there is much more opened-and-died-in-committee legislation than there is legislation with any substantial benefit for today's veterans commensurate with their sacrifice.

So whatever happened to the war?

Let's start with the first war – Afghanistan.

THEY'RE BAAAACK!! The Taliban is back in force. They control many areas in the south and along the Pakistan border. They are increasingly infiltrating the cities with suicide bombers and paramilitary fighters. A suicide bomber killed the deputy governor of Helmand province last week.

They have engaged in set-piece battles with NATO forces, particularly in the south. NATO casualties are rising, as are Afghani casualties, military and civilian. The condition of women is returning rapidly to the situation under the old Taliban, and female school teachers and women running businesses are increasingly being targeted for terrorist assaults and assassinations.

The only progress seems to be that opium is once again a bumper crop, and Mullah Mohammed, bowing to international pressure, has

told his forces to stop beheading the people they terrorize and shoot them or hang them instead. - That's it after almost six years?

Then of course there is Iraq.

The surge has worked – in Baghdad at least. The killings are down – not done, but down. They may be coming back up.

We are arming the Iraqi forces with modern American weapons, although we know that those forces are infiltrated by the militias.

We are bribing the Sunni leadership to do what they already know they must do and would probably have done without our money, and that is get rid of the Al Qaida-in-Iraq thugs.

In the Shia area the state of women has reverted not just to pre-Saddam conditions, but to pre-20<sup>th</sup> century conditions.

The Maliki government is effectively forming our foreign policy in the region in that they refuse to do anything that we want them to do that might upset either the Shia mullahs or their Iranian neighbors. While we are paying the Sunni tribal leaders to support us, and they are so far, Maliki is denying them even proportional parity in government.

There are disturbing reports that violence is increasing in the unattended countryside. The southern area around Basra is falling apart after the pull-back of the British forces. American casualties almost doubled in January over December.

Then there is the war as it is waged right here in the US of A

Given that half of America doesn't even seem to care to participate, even to give the war a thought from day to day, the remaining half are waging a war here at home over what it means to be patriotic, what the Constitution says about war and the powers of government, what the United States' obligations are under international treaties, how we should conduct ourselves in the world, and what we owe those who stand up and sign up.

*“Patriotism is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime.”*

Adlai Stevenson

The divide seems to be between those who believe that the Constitution requires that in order to protect our freedoms we must not give them away willy-nilly, and those who believe that the Constitution is unclear, and who are afraid and are willing to sacrifice freedoms for a sense of security – real or not.

These are troublesome differences, because they speak to two completely different nations. One proudly free and democratic, and one willing to define something less than the historical concept of freedom and democracy as a new "freedom".

"It is part of the general pattern of misguided policy that our country is now geared to an arms economy which was bred in an artificially induced psychosis of war hysteria and nurtured upon an incessant propaganda of fear."

—General Douglas MacArthur

The cliché, "Freedom is not Free" is batted about with obviously varying meaning. To some that means "Freedom is not Free so please send your kid to fight wherever the CINC says to go."

We seem to forget that the original meaning was, "Freedom is not Free so all of you step up – all of you do your share – all of you sacrifice – all of you accept that you will always live under some insecurity." Why? Because it is truly worth it.

And don't forget that also means that "Freedom is not Free because we owe those who defend us daily everything that a grateful nation can offer." This does not mean collecting an additional \$1.2B from Tricare recipients, while giving away \$150B, mostly to banks who gambled and lost, and to people who can't control their spending.

We must pay a price for freedom, but we must not pay the price of real freedom to gain false freedom. Breaking down the protections and the checks and balances provisions of our Constitution are not worth it.

A unitary executive, not beholden to the peoples' representatives, is what our fathers fought against two centuries ago. Representatives who represent themselves rather than us are likewise not the legislative construct for which our fathers risked their "lives, fortunes and sacred honor." A judiciary that can set aside not only the clear precepts of the Constitution, but also can ignore two centuries of precedent would be anathema to those who gave us the precious gift called America.

**We will prevail**

We will come through this trying time, because we have proven again and again that we are strong enough to do so – that the structure of our nation as given us by our fathers is tough and resilient. To do that we will have to stop fighting each other and start writing the next chapter of our blessedly free world.

*"I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it."*

Thomas Jefferson

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

### NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

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

### WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

Membership is open, free, and very worthwhile! Get your fellow veterans, and veterans' family members to join vuft! We are beginning to be heard, and we need you to help us get the message out. If each of us would bring in one new member every month, what an impact we could have!

### CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

Please check the website at [www.vuft.org](http://www.vuft.org). We have revised it and are regularly adding useful references.

## ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

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

**DOES YOUR PERSONAL CASE APPLIES TO THIS LITIGATION? YOU CAN GET YOUR CASE EVALUATED [HERE](#).**

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

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

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS** met on 26 January 2008 at the chair's home in Santa Barbara, CA – 1100 - 1530. New initiatives were adopted which will be covered in future newsletters as they mature.

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

### MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

Sandy-

Something that your readers might like to know is that I am going to Congress again in April to lobby to get the presumptive date of AO [Agent Orange] back to at least 1961 and maybe earlier. If you have any readers that were in Korea after the conflict ended in 1953 and saw defoliant being sprayed please consider writing an affidavit, have their signature notarized and sending it to me at PO Box 511, Pendleton, Oregon 97801

Thanks ~ Barbara Wright

As of 30 JAN 08, according to the RAO Bulletin Update:

S.2309: Compensation for Combat Veterans Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the service treatable as service engaged in combat with the enemy for utilization of non-official evidence for proof of service-connection in a combat-related disease or injury. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 11/6/07). Cosponsors (None). Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Norm Cegelnik

### RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

#### **PRESIDENT BUSH SIGNS H.R. 4986, THE NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008 INTO LAW**

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 4986, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008. The Act authorizes funding for the defense of the United States and its interests abroad, for military construction, and for national security-related energy programs.

Provisions of the Act, including sections 841, 846, 1079, and 1222, purport to impose requirements that could inhibit the President's ability to carry out his constitutional obligations to take care that the laws be faithfully executed, to protect national security, to supervise the executive branch, and to execute his authority as Commander in Chief. The executive branch shall construe such provisions in a manner consistent with the constitutional authority of the President.

GEORGE W. BUSH  
THE WHITE HOUSE,  
January 28, 2008. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080128-10.html>

**President Bush's signing statement took exception to the following four provisions:**

#### SEC. 841. COMMISSION ON WARTIME CONTRACTING IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Allowing Congress to examine federal contracting for reconstruction,, logistics, security in Iraq

#### SEC. 846. PROTECTION FOR CONTRACTOR EMPLOYEES FROM REPRISAL FOR DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN INFORMATION.

Strengthening contractor "whistleblower protection"

#### SEC. 1079. COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE COMMITTEES ON ARMED SERVICES OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Concerning previous lack of response to multiple oversight requests by Congress

#### SEC. 1222. LIMITATION ON AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES RELATING TO IRAQ.

Would prohibit funds being spent for permanent bases and for control of the oil industry in Iraq

## **H.R. 4253: MILITARY RESERVIST AND VETERAN SMALL BUSINESS REAUTHORIZATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2007**

To improve and expand small business assistance programs for veterans of the armed forces and military reservists, and for other purposes. [Full Text](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Jason Altmire \[D-PA\]](#) - Having passed in identical form in both the House and Senate, this bill now awaits the signature of the President before becoming law. **AKAKA INTRODUCES COST-OF-LIVING-INCREASE FOR DISABLED VETERANS**

February 8, 2008

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, introduced legislation today to increase veterans' compensation through a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). A bipartisan group of Veterans' Affairs Committee Members signed on as original cosponsors of this legislation, including Ranking Member Burr, and Senators Rockefeller, Murray, Obama, Sanders, Brown, Webb, Tester, Craig, and Isakson.

"The COLA increase must be understood as a continuing cost of war. This legislation is necessary to protect the value of the compensation disabled veterans and their survivors receive and rely upon," said Senator Akaka.

<More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/08/scva08/scva020808-1.htm>>

## **SENATORS CALL FOR IMPROVED COMPENSATION FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**

February 5, 2008

Chairman and majority Committee members urge VA to improve proposed regulations and repeal "10 percent rule"

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, was joined by Senators Rockefeller, Murray, Obama, Tester, Brown, and Sanders in submitting formal comments yesterday on regulations proposed by the Department of Veterans Affairs governing compensation for veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI). TBI is a signature wound of the war in Iraq, affecting many veterans who have suffered IED blast injuries.

"The new rules must provide for a fair evaluation of the veteran's disabilities. Unfortunately, the proposed regulations do not," said Senator Akaka.

The proposed regulations and the formal comment letter sent by Chairman Akaka and majority members can be found at: <http://veterans.senate.gov/public/media/Letterfeb508.pdf> <More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/08/scva08/scva020508-1.htm>>

## **RETREAT – NEWS**

### **THE TROOPS DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO DO AFTER THE ROUSING SUCCESS OF THE "SURGE"**

#### **U.S. WILL FIGHT IN PAKISTAN IF ASKED**

Associated Press | January 25, 2008

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration is willing to send a small number of U.S. combat troops to Pakistan to help fight the insurgency there if Pakistani authorities should asked for such help, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Thursday.

"We remain ready, willing and able to assist the Pakistanis and to partner with them to provide additional training, to conduct joint operations, should they desire to do so," Gates told a news conference. <More at:

<http://media.www.iowastatedaily.com/media/storage/paper818/news/2008/01/25/AssociatedPress/Pentagon.Chief.Says.Us.Would.Send.Combat.Troops.To.Pakistan.If.Asked-3167700.shtml>

#### **AUSTRALIA ANNOUNCES TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM IRAQ II**

1/29/2008 12:32:01 AM

In a severe blow to US efforts to bring about stability in war-torn Iraq, Australia has announced its decision to withdraw its military troops from the country. <More at: <http://www.rttnews.com/FOREX/politicalnews.asp?date=01/29/2008&item=5>>

## **IRAQ TROOP REDUCTIONS? NOT SO FAST**

Associated Press | January 30, 2008

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration is sending strong signals that U.S. troop reductions in Iraq will slow or stop altogether this summer, a move that would jeopardize hopes of relieving strain on the Army and Marine Corps and revive debate over an open-ended U.S. commitment in Iraq. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,161053,00.html>>

## **U.S. ARMY SHIFTS FOCUS TO NATION-BUILDING**

Michael R. Gordon - February 8, 2008

WASHINGTON: The U.S. Army has drafted a new operations manual that elevates the mission of stabilizing war-torn nations, making it equal in importance to defeating adversaries on the battlefield.

Military officials described the new document, the first new edition of the army's basic comprehensive doctrine since 2001, as a major development that draws on the hard-learned lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan, where initial military successes gave way to long, grueling struggles to establish control. It is also an illustration of how far the Pentagon has moved beyond George W. Bush's stance, frequently stated in his first presidential campaign eight years ago, against the use of the military to support "nation building" efforts. <More at: <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/02/08/america/military.php>>

## **MILITARY EYES MYSTERIOUS TROOP DEATHS**

Associated Press | February 08, 2008

WASHINGTON - The Army's top doctor, noting the drug overdose death of actor Heath Ledger, said Feb. 7 the military is investigating a series of suspected similar deaths among wounded and injured Soldiers.

Lt. Gen. Eric B. Schoemaker, the Army's surgeon general, said there has been "a series, a sequence of deaths" in the new, so-called "warrior transition units." Those are special units set up last year to give sick, injured and war-wounded troops coordinated medical care, financial advice, legal help and other services as they transition toward either a return to uniform or back into civilian life. <More at: <http://www.foxnews.com/wires/2008Feb07/0,4670,ArmyDrugOverdoses,00.html>>

## **NEW STRYKER FARING POORLY IN FIELD**

Christian Lowe - January 30, 2008

BAQUBAH, Iraq - The newest version of the Army's popular Stryker combat vehicle is garnering poor reviews here from Soldiers assigned to man its tank-like hull.

The General Dynamics Corp.-built Mobile Gun System looks like a typical eight-wheeled Stryker, except for a massive 105mm gun mounted on its roof. The gun fires three different types of projectiles, including explosive rounds, tank-busters and a "canister round" that ejects hundreds of steel pellets similar to a shotgun shell.

But while the system looks good on paper and the Army's all for it, Soldiers with the 4th Battalion of the 9th Infantry Regiment -- one of the first units to receive the new vehicle for their deployment to Iraq -- don't have a lot of good things to say about it.

"I wish [the enemy] would just blow mine up so I could be done with it," said Spec. Kyle Handrahan, 22, of Anaheim, Calif., a tanker assigned to Alpha Company, 4/9's MGS platoon.

"It's a piece," another MGS platoon member chimed in. "Nothing works on it."

<More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,160981,00.html>>

## **OUTLAWED JOB CONVERSIONS STILL IN 2009 BUDGET**

Rick Maze - Staff writer\_ Feb 5, 2008

The 2009 defense budget prepared by the Pentagon disobeys a congressional order to halt the conversion of military medical jobs into civilian positions, senior lawmakers said.

The House Armed Services Committee pushed for a freeze on the conversion of the jobs out of concerns that it would hurt the quality of medical care for service members and their families, and eliminate noncombat jobs that could offer a respite for battle-weary medical personnel. <More at: [http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/02/military\\_defense\\_jobconversions\\_080205w/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/02/military_defense_jobconversions_080205w/)>

## TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2/11	1100 - 1400	InfoMart 1950 Stemmons Freeway Dallas, TX	Career Fair		(214) 800-8000
2/13	1100 - 1400	Omni San Antonio Hotel 9821 Colonnade Blvd San Antonio, TX	Career Fair		210.691.8888
2/14	1100 - 1400	Crowne Plaza 4100 PRESIDENTIAL BLVD Philadelphia, PA	Career Fair		215-477-0200
2/15-2/17		Phoenix AZ	Standdown	Susan Marcell	602-379-7132
2/16/08	1300	Vandenberg AFB, CA Pacific Coast Club	Luncheon Honoring Art Hicks Tuskegee Airman	VUFT, Inc. Bob Handy, Chair	805-962-9082 805-455-5259
2/17/08		Phoenix, AZ	Stand down	Susan Marcell	602-379-7132
2/19	1100 - 1400	Radisson Martinique On Broadway Hotel 49 WEST 32ND STREET New York, NY	Career Fair		212-736-3800
2/23		Milwaukee, WI	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Greg Jacobs</a>	414-902-5729
2/25	1100 - 1400	Holiday Inn San Francisco Golden Gateway 1500 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA	Career Fair		415-441-4000
2/26	1100 - 1400	Fort Bragg Officer's Club Building 1-4930 Armistead St & Totten St Fort Bragg, NC	Career Fair		910-907-2582
3/16-3/18		National Labor College 10000 New Hampshire Ave. Silver Spring, MD	Winter Soldier II	<a href="#">IVAW</a>	773-276-4189

**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

### **VA INCREASES TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS, THEN TAKES MOST OF IT AWAY**

WASHINGTON (January 31, 2008) - Over a million eligible veterans will see their mileage reimbursement more than double starting tomorrow, for travel to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities.

"This increase helps veterans -- especially those living in rural areas -- offset some of the gasoline costs as they travel to VA's world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Increasing the mileage reimbursement is one more step by VA to help veterans access the health care they deserve."

The 2008 appropriations act provided funding for VA to increase the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile. The increase goes into effect on Feb. 1.

After little more than a month on the job, Secretary Peake used his authority to establish the first increase in the mileage reimbursement in 30 years, fulfilling a pledge he made during his Senate confirmation hearing last month. While increasing the payment, VA, as mandated by law, also equally increased the deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements. The new deductibles are \$7.77 for a one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month.

However, these deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

## RESPONSE FROM A READER

Welcome news... But he giveth.. and he taketh away... The deduction is BS...tell your congressman

The 2008 appropriations act provided funding for VA to increase the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile. The increase goes into effect on Feb. 1.

My travel pay went from \$7.26 minus the VA deduction of \$6.00 = \$1.26 ~ to \$18.80 minus the VA deduction of \$15.54 = \$3.26... WOW a \$2.00 increase!

I don't know how the VA figures the mileage.. must be from edge of town or center..My mileage from my House to VAMC 76.4 miles, round trip...it should be \$21.80...but they figure it a lot less.

I never accepted my \$1.26.. I go to window with my slip.. When she tells me how much, I tell them to keep it they surely need it more than me... You figure it at 20 Miles per gallon at \$3.00 a gallon..plus wear & tear & Insurance it still don't come close to expense... and is a lot less than what a VA employee gets for travel - 48.5 per mile in 2007 2008 will be out soon from GSA

## **BUSH ADMINISTRATION ARGUES THAT VETERANS NOT ENTITLED TO SPECIFIC TYPES OF HEALTH CARE**

Feb 05, 2008

The Bush administration on Wednesday filed arguments in a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court of San Francisco stating that veterans have no legal right to specific types of medical care, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports. The arguments were filed in response to a class-action lawsuit brought by veterans who claim they were illegally denied mental health treatment by the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (<More at: [http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily\\_reports/rep\\_index.cfm?DR\\_ID=50224](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=50224)>

## **MULLEN: ARMY MUST RETURN TO 12-MONTH TOURS**

Anne Flaherty - The Associated Press - Feb 7, 2008

WASHINGTON — The top uniformed military officer on Wednesday described a tired U.S. military force, worn thin by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and unlikely to come home in large numbers anytime soon.

The assessment comes as President Bush decides whether to continue troop reductions in Iraq — possibly endangering fragile security gains made in recent months — or not, and risk straining ground forces further.

“The well is deep, but it is not infinite,” Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Senate Armed Services Committee. “We must get Army deployments down to 12 months as soon as possible. People are tired.”

<More at: [http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/02/ap\\_mullen\\_080206a/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/02/ap_mullen_080206a/)>

## **NEW WAR VETERANS FACE JOB WOES**

Hope Yen - Associated Press Writer - Feb 8

Strained by war, recently discharged veterans are having a harder time finding civilian jobs and are more likely to earn lower wages for years due partly to employer concerns about their mental health and overall skills, a government study says.

The Veterans Affairs Department report, obtained Thursday by The Associated Press, points to continuing problems with the Bush administration's efforts to help 4.4 million troops who have been discharged from active duty since 1990.

The 2007 study by the consulting firm Abt Associates Inc. found that 18 percent of the veterans were unemployed within one to three years of discharge, while one out of four who did find jobs earned less than \$21,840 a year. Many had taken advantage of government programs such as the GI Bill to boost job prospects, but there was little evidence that education benefits yielded higher pay or better advancement. <More at: [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080208/ap\\_on\\_go\\_ca\\_st\\_pe/veterans\\_jobs\\_10](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080208/ap_on_go_ca_st_pe/veterans_jobs_10)>

## **BUSH'S SURPRISE EDUCATION PROPOSAL FOR MILITARY FAMILIES**

Elizabeth Gibson - Feb 05, 2008 - Medill News Service

WASHINGTON – Most military men and women apply for education benefits that provide tuition assistance, but they generally only use about half the money the military allots them. That's just less money the military has to pay out.

However, an idea for an alternative way to spend some of that cash on education has been floating around Capitol Hill for nearly a decade. And President Bush might have given it new life Monday night in his State of the Union address.

"Our military families also sacrifice for America," Bush said. "They endure sleepless nights and the daily struggle of providing for children while a loved one is serving far from home. So I ask you to join me in ... allowing our troops to transfer their unused education benefits to their spouses or children." <More at: <http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/washington/news.aspx?id=77069>>

### **BOYNTON JFL VETS FUNDRAISER UNDER INVESTIGATION**

Susan R. Miller - Palm Beach Post Staff Writer - January 24, 2008

The president of a 10-year-old Boynton Beach nonprofit is under investigation here and in Massachusetts for allegedly misleading donors and misappropriating hundreds of thousands of dollars meant for American veterans, court records show.

The allegations against Frank J. Cariello, 70, and the Veterans Charitable Foundation, was sparked by complaints from donors in Massachusetts who had been solicited by telemarketers working for Cariello's charity, which operates in about a dozen states. They are laid out in hundreds of pages from search warrants filed this week and last week in Palm Beach County Circuit Court. <More at: <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/localnews/content/south/epaper/2008/01/24/0124VETS.html>>

### **ARMY BLOCKS DISABILITY PAPERWORK AID AT FORT DRUM**

Ari Shapiro - Morning Edition - January 29, 2008

Army officials in upstate New York instructed representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs not to help disabled soldiers at Fort Drum Army base with their military disability paperwork last year. That paperwork can be crucial because it helps determine whether soldiers will get annual disability payments and health care after they're discharged.

Now soldiers at Fort Drum say they feel betrayed by the institutions that are supposed to support them. The soldiers want to know why the Army would want to stop them from getting help with their disability paperwork and why the VA— whose mission is to help veterans — would agree to the Army's request. <More at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18492376>>

### **HURT GIS' MEDICAL STATUS ALTERED**

Erin Emery - *The Denver Post* - 01/29/2008

Some say the Army is bending the rules to get soldiers redeployed.

COLORADO SPRINGS — Army Staff Sgt. Jack Auble was in the process of being medically discharged after serving nearly 20 years in the military when he was sent to Baghdad last year.

Auble, 43, suffers from severe osteoporosis of the spine, bulging discs and compression fractures.

Auble had a "permanent" profile, meaning his condition would not improve, and because of his limitations, he did not meet the Army's retention standards.

Nevertheless, Auble's medical paperwork was changed. He received a new, "temporary" status, used to indicate his condition would improve, and he was redeployed. He said he was not re-examined by a medical professional at Fort Drum, N.Y., before receiving a new profile. <More at: [http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci\\_8104393#](http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_8104393#)>

### **BRAIN SCREENINGS FOR VETS MAY BE FLAWED**

Hope Yen — 31 January

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands of Iraq war veterans who could have suffered traumatic brain injury may be getting unnecessary or inadequate health care because Veterans Affairs officials have yet to determine whether their initial screening tests are reliable, investigators say.

A draft report by the Government Accountability Office, obtained this week by The Associated Press, highlights the Bush administration's continuing difficulties in treating traumatic brain injury, a leading problem among soldiers struck by roadside bombs in the Iraq war. It also comes as a provocative military study this week found that symptoms of memory loss and irritability that have been tied to brain injury might be more accurately attributed to post-traumatic stress and depression.

The GAO review of nine VA medical centers found that months after former VA Secretary Jim Nicholson in April promoted new screenings for brain injury and pledged personal responsibility in seeing them through, the department was still struggling to determine how to best gauge the clinical accuracy of its screenings.

In the report, the VA also acknowledged problems with follow-up appointments after veterans initially tested positive under the VA's screening tool. One medical center reported 27 cases in which their doctors failed to notify patients for additional evaluation because of glitches in the computerized program.

<More at: <http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5i9DsPWrfDNMKsb0O2AUWqgXrNySwD8UGOBLG0>>



**NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF FEBRUARY 6, 2008**

This week the Army and Navy announced an increase, while the Marine Corps announced a decrease. The Air Force and Coast Guard numbers did not change. The net collective result is 843 more reservists mobilized than last week. At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 74,041; Navy Reserve, 5,025; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,231; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,693; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 334. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been mobilized to 95,324, 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/Feb2008/d20080206ngr.pdf>.

**OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SATURDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2008**

**OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (1,788 DAYS)**

KILLED US	3,958
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 2/9]	28,870
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 1/10]	≥30,537
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 1/10]	135
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	4
KILLED UK	174
KILLED OTHER COALITION	133
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	1,001
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 88,479
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [12/9/27]	2.1M/2.5M

**OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,317 DAYS)**

KILLED US (1/10)	483
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 10/2007]	7,720
KILLED COALITION (6/2007)	281
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,472
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE [1/10]	\$493,027,195,606

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

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

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

## AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

### **ANTI-WAR CANDIDATES ARE TOP RECIPIENTS OF '08 DONATIONS FROM U.S. TROOPS**

Conservatives opposed to redeployment in Iraq have consistently claimed that U.S. troops are on their side:

President Bush: The [military] families gathered here understand that our troops want to finish the job. [\[Link\]](#)

Sen. John McCain (R-AZ): I want to — and I want to tell you something, sir. I just finished having Thanksgiving with the troops, and their message to you is — the message of these brave men and women who are serving over there is: Let us win. Let us win. [\[Link\]](#)

Yet U.S. troops disagree. Yesterday, the Center for Responsive Politics reported that members of the military donated the most not to McCain, but to [two anti-war candidates](#):

Individuals in the Army, Navy and Air Force made those branches of the armed services among the top contributors in the 4th Quarter, ranking No. 13, No. 18 and No. 21, respectively. In 2007, Republican Ron Paul, who opposes U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, was the top recipient of money from donors in the military, collecting at least \$212,000 from them. Barack Obama, another war opponent, was second with about \$94,000.

These donations reflect the military's disapproval with the Iraq war and President Bush's handling of it. A recent Military Times poll found that just [46 percent of U.S. troops](#) now believe that the country should have invaded Iraq, and only 40 percent approve of Bush's handling of the war.

<http://thinkprogress.org/2008/02/05/military-donations/>

## **THIS IS HAPPENING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY**

### **ST. PAUL'S LAST VFW HALL TO CLOSE AS RANKS OF VETERANS DECLINE**

Knight Ridder | January 28, 2008

For St. Paul's last VFW hall, it's closing time.

On one recent afternoon, 84-year-old Gordon Kirk, commander of VFW Post 8854, was the only veteran in the place.

He drifted past the war memorabilia and a case packed with sports trophies from the 1960s. "We had some wonderful times here," he murmured.

Those memories, like the VFW, are fading. Kirk is planning to sell the building as soon as he can find a buyer.

It will be the last of about 15 halls to close, making all nine of the city's VFW posts homeless, meeting in community centers or libraries.

Across the country, the number of VFW posts is dropping, as an estimated 1,500 World War II veterans die each day. Membership has dropped about 17 percent since 1992 to 1.8 million members.

Minnesota is losing about six VFW posts a year and now has 268 -- down by one-third from the peak.

The exceptions are VFW clubs that successfully recruit veterans of Vietnam and the Middle East conflicts, and the American Legion posts. <More at: <http://news.aol.com/story/ a/st-pauls-last-vfw-hall-to-close-as-ranks/n20080127143009990001>>

## **ADD-ON ~ THE "BAKE SALE" METHOD OF SUPPORTING THE TROOPS**

### **BLESS THEM IN ST. LOUIS FOR DOING THIS, BUT IS THIS THE WAY WE SHOULD BE SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS?**

#### **COATS FOR VETERANS**

Trish Wallace - January 29, 2008

Hoping to warm the hearts--and backs--of homeless veterans, Rock Community Fire Protection District is partnering with the Veteran's Administration and Freer Elementary Cub Scout Pack 401 for their annual coat drive.

The drive will specifically help those involved in the Homeless Veterans Program at the VA Medical Center at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis County.

Coats, hats, scarves and winter wear should be clean and only gently used before being donated. Evelyn Paul, social worker and homeless coordinator with the Homeless Veterans Program, said that winter clothing in large, extra large and 2X sizes are especially needed.

While some veterans in need might not be homeless, they might not be able to afford a warm coat of their own. As transportation is not always a guarantee for those in need, many veterans travel by foot, even during low temperatures. This weekend's coat drive should supply winter clothing for such individuals.

Last year, the drive brought in 240 coats. Coordinators hope to bring in more this year.

The drive is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at Rock Community's House 2, located at 1020 Main St. in Imperial.

[http://jeffcountyjournal.sttoday.com/articles/2008/02/09/news/sj2tn20080129-0130jef\\_coat.ii1.txt](http://jeffcountyjournal.sttoday.com/articles/2008/02/09/news/sj2tn20080129-0130jef_coat.ii1.txt)

## 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