

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 17 THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 APRIL 2007

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

WHAT CAN WE GIVE THEM?

When I was a young soldier, old soldiers gave me much. They taught me to be a soldier – a man – a citizen – a patriot. There were reasons for doing what we did, and they taught those reasons to me. Some of the lessons held up; others didn't. The good lessons stuck.

Take a good sight picture – control your breathing – shoot on the exhale. It worked every time. Never sleep without cleaning your weapon – there may not be time to do it when you wake up. Treat prisoners fairly and treat civilians with respect.

Leadership was both learned and earned. Your men counted on you to be cool, smart, fair, tough, and dependable. They looked to you to get them through it all, as you looked to your leaders for the same.

Feed your men first. Carry extra dry socks – some of your men would forget them. No matter how screwed up orders might be from higher command, give clear implementing orders and follow them yourself. Never leave anyone behind, on the field or in a local tavern.

They taught us to hate war but they also taught us that the nation would always depend on some of its citizens knowing how to fight.

In 1973 the draft ended and with it went any vestige of a public idea of honorable national service. By the late seventies we weren't permitted to wear our uniforms out in public in the nation's capital, although that changed back later.

Military service became something that other folks' children did, not ours. The nation meddled endlessly in non-descript wars like Granada, and Panama, where the public just didn't see their interest, and they relegated the idea of service to the backwater of their minds.

September 11, 2001 changed that view somewhat, but it certainly didn't revive the national sentiment of 1941-45 or even of 1950-53.

Iraq flew in the face of all of those old lessons. Soldiers looked to their leaders for a clear statement of the reasons why they were being asked to die and got nothing except jingoistic America-first reasons. Their Commander-in-Chief had a new rationale every day. Civilians showed up who didn't have to follow the rules and who made four times what they made for doing the same job. They got great meals if they were REMFs or pogues, and they saw the contractors making a fortune, legally or illegally, for serving them, while they worried about the rent or mortgage and if their families were going to make it.

We owe them, but what can we give them?

We can give them our respect for doing what we asked them to do and for doing it well. You say that you didn't ask them to go? Well your

president did and your Congress let him. Soldiers seldom argue the niceties of Article I or the War Powers Act; we must do that for them.

We can give them the promise that they should neither have to fight the battle nor the post-battle based on some bureaucratic cost-effectiveness argument. There service is so far beyond what the rest of us are doing that we must step up no matter the cost.

We can give them support in its fullest sense – training, equipment, leadership, benefits, clear mission – and can demand that their leaders provide all this and more.

We can give them dignity in returning and lifelong recompense for their sacrifice – no wait, no hassle.

Despite what they have seen in the last few years, their world has not changed that much and their nation still holds them and their lives dear. We can give them the assurance that whenever this misbegotten war is over, we will never again send them into a war of choice, but only into a war of necessity, and only after we have truly fought on every front with all our skills to avoid that war.

Our relationship with the world has certainly changed. We can give them the promise that we will repair our relationships with the rest of the world's democracies so that when a real threat is imminent, we all will be in it together.

We can give them the pledge that from now on the ultimate American goal is not beating everyone into submission, rather it is living peacefully with everyone, even if that costs almost anything short of our liberty.

Finally we can give them our word that never again will industry be allowed to make obscene profits off of their wounding and death, whether that be arms manufacturers, service providers, or just plain political cronies.

Above all, we can give them honor, regardless of the political motives that sent them to war. [Ed.]

“War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.”

John Stuart Mill

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

VA SEEKING SURVIVING WWI VETERANS

Chris Vaughn - McClatchy Newspapers - April 11, 2007

FORT WORTH, Texas -- All doughboys, Uncle Sam wants you! With the number of known surviving veterans of World War I down to a handful, the Veterans Administration is asking for the public's help to identify others who might have escaped attention.

Contact them at ww1@va.gov. <More at: <http://www.pantagraph.com/articles/2007/04/11/news/doc461cf61f32330097566760.txt>>

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

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

BILL CALLS FOR ALL VETS TO GET VA CARE

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Apr 19, 2007

A key senator has joined forces with a New Jersey congressman in trying to re-open enrollment for veterans' medical care to veterans with moderate incomes and no service-connected disabilities. The bill, introduced in the House and Senate, would restore eligibility to veterans' health care to about 242,000 people.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash. has joined Rep. Steve Rothman, D-N.J., in sponsoring the Honor Our Commitment to Veterans Act, which would reverse a Bush administration decision four years ago to bar new enrollments in the VA health plan for those in Priority 8, the lowest category on VA's health care priority list. Priority 8 includes veterans who either have no service-connected disability or a zero percent disability rating, with incomes above a threshold based on family size. The thresholds range from \$27,790 for a veteran with no dependents to \$38,948 for a veteran with four dependents, with an additional \$1,866 in income to allow for each additional dependent.

The enrollment ban took effect on Jan. 17, 2003, and was done to cut costs. VA officials said that most of the veterans who are in Priority 8 either have or could get other medical coverage. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2007/04/military_veterancare_eligibility_070419w

RETREAT – NEWS

PACE: SURGE SUCCESS SEEN BY SUMMER

Military.com - Christian Lowe - April 18, 2007

The Pentagon's top general said Tuesday he expects commanders to have some idea whether the troop increase to secure Baghdad is working by the end of the summer. Despite the fact that all five Army brigades deployed for the surge won't be fully in place until June, Joint Chiefs chairman, Gen. Peter Pace, said by August commanders "should have a flavor of what's going on" with the security situation the troop increase is supposed to bring about.

"After having everybody there two or three months, we ought to have a pretty good sense of 'how goes it?'" Pace told reporters during an April 17 interview in Washington. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,132646,00.html>

A SLIGHTLY OLDER ARTICLE THAT DOESN'T SEEM TO FIT PACE'S CLAIM

US COMMANDERS ADMIT: WE FACE A VIETNAM-STYLE COLLAPSE

Simon Tisdall - The Guardian - March 1, 2007

An elite team of officers advising the US commander, General David Petraeus, in Baghdad has concluded that they have six months to win the war in Iraq - or face a Vietnam-style collapse in political and public support that could force the military into a hasty retreat. The officers - combat veterans who are experts in counter-insurgency - are charged with implementing the "new way forward" strategy announced by George Bush on January 10. The plan includes a controversial "surge" of 21,500 additional American troops to establish security in the Iraqi capital and Anbar province.

But the team, known as the "Baghdad brains trust" and ensconced in the heavily fortified Green Zone, is struggling to overcome a range of entrenched problems in what has become a race against time, according to a former senior administration official familiar with their deliberations.

"They know they are operating under a clock. They know they are going to hear a lot more talk in Washington about 'Plan B' by the autumn - meaning withdrawal. They know the next six-month period is their opportunity. And they say it's getting harder every day," he said.

By improving security, the plan's short-term aim is to create time and space for the Iraqi government to bring rival Shia, Sunni and Kurd factions together in a process of national reconciliation, American officials say. If that works within the stipulated timeframe, longer term schemes for rebuilding Iraq under the so-called "go long" strategy will be set in motion. But the next six months are make-or-break for the US military and the Iraqi government. The main obstacles confronting Gen Petraeus's team are:

- Insufficient troops on the ground
- A "disintegrating" international coalition
- An anticipated increase in violence in the south as the British leave
- Morale problems as casualties rise
- A failure of political will in Washington and/or Baghdad

<More at: www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,,2023866,00.html>

APPARENTLY NO ONE HAS THE STRAIGHT POOP

IRAQ SURGE MAY BE EXTENDED

Associated Press - April 21, 2007

WASHINGTON - The Pentagon is laying the groundwork to extend the U.S. troop buildup in Iraq. At the same time, the administration is warning Iraqi leaders that the boost in forces could be reversed if political reconciliation is not evident by summer.

This approach underscores the central difficulty facing President Bush. If political progress is not possible in the relatively short term, then the justification for sending thousands more U.S. troops to Baghdad - and accepting the rising U.S. combat death toll that has resulted - will disappear. That in turn would put even more pressure on Bush to yield to the Democratic-led push to wind down the war in coming months. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,133140,00.html>

LEAST OF ALL THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

BUSH: UNAWARE OF DOD PLANS TO EXTEND TOUR

Stars and Stripes - Mideast edition - April 14, 2007

WASHINGTON — White House officials on Thursday admitted that President Bush was unaware of defense plans to immediately extend Army combat tours when he criticized Democrats' budget plans as potentially forcing troops to spend more time in Iraq.

<More at: <http://pstrips.com/article.asp?section=104&article=45088>>

UNLESS IT IS THE FAMILIES OF THE TROOPS

'THIS IS TOUGH NEWS': SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES BRACE FOR EXTENDED TOURS

Joshua Partlow and Sylvia Moreno - Washington Post Foreign Service - April 13, 2007; A13

BAQUBAH, Iraq, April 12 -- They found out by reading exasperated e-mails from their spouses, hearing somber announcements from their platoon commanders, seeing snippets of the secretary of defense at a televised news conference: The American soldiers who thought they were staying in Iraq one year would now stay 15 months. All of them. From Texas to Baghdad and Baqubah to the Beltway, the reaction Thursday among U.S. soldiers and their families to the news of the mass extension was akin to a collective groan. <More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/12/AR2007041202330_pf.html>

BUT COMP TIME WILL MAKE IT ALL HUNKY DORY

DOD ANNOUNCES PROGRAM TO RECOGNIZE FREQUENT DEPLOYMENT

April 18, 2007

The Department of Defense announced today a program to recognize service members who deploy or mobilize beyond the established rotation policy goals. The goals for the Active and Guard/Reserve units are one year deployed to two years at home station (1:2) and one year mobilized to five years demobilized (1:5) respectively.

Administrative absence will be granted to service members when these goals are not met and can be used at their convenience. This is provided to enhance the service member's quality of life and will be done on the following basis:

- One day for each month a service member is deployed over 12 of 36 consecutive months of active duty or over 12 months of a 72 month period mobilized for the guard/reserves.
- Two days will be granted when thresholds of more than 18 of 36 consecutive months for active duty or 18 of 72 months for the guard/reserve are exceeded.
- Four days will be provided when thresholds of more than 24 of 36 consecutive months for active duty or 24 of 72 months for the guard/reserve are exceeded.

Administrative absence is authorized by the commander. It is separate and distinct from normal leave accrued by a service member. <More at: www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2007/04/mil-070418-dod01.htm>

AMERICA'S BROKEN-DOWN ARMY

Mark Thompson - Thursday, Apr. 05, 2007

For most Americans, the Iraq war is both distant and never ending. For Private Matthew Zeimer, it was neither. Shortly after midnight on Feb. 2, Zeimer had his first taste of combat as he scrambled to the roof of the 3rd Infantry Division's Combat Outpost Grant in central Ramadi. Under cover of darkness, Sunni insurgents were attacking his new post from nearby buildings. Amid the smoke, noise and confusion, a blast suddenly ripped through the 3-ft. concrete wall shielding Zeimer and a fellow soldier, killing them both. Zeimer had been in Iraq for a week. He had been at his first combat post for two hours.

If Zeimer's combat career was brief, so was his training. He enlisted last June at age 17, three weeks after graduating from Dawson County High School in eastern Montana. After finishing nine weeks of basic training and additional preparation in infantry tactics in Oklahoma, he arrived at Fort Stewart, Ga., in early December. But Zeimer had missed the intense four-week pre-Iraq training—a taste of what troops will face in combat—that his 1st Brigade comrades got at their home post in October. Instead, Zeimer and about 140 other members of the 4,000-strong brigade got a cut-rate, 10-day course on weapon use, first aid and Iraqi culture. That's the same length as the course that teaches soldiers assigned to generals' household staffs the finer points of table service. <More at: www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1606888,00.html>

THANKS FOR THE ARMOR, MOM, BUT I CAN'T USE IT

CORPS RESTRICTS NON-ISSUED ARMOR USE

Military.com - Christian Lowe - April 19, 2007

The Marine Corps issued a directive Tuesday restricting the use of store-bought personal protective equipment in the war zone, including body armor, ballistic glasses, armor plates and fire-retardant clothing.

Corps officials say Marines may not use such protective equipment in place of gear issued by service. Marines are free to buy and wear their own safety equipment - including body armor- officials explained, but they must also use their issued items and will not be reimbursed for their purchase.

The Army issued a similar message in March of 2006 after controversy erupted over claims that a certain type of body armor vest designed by Fresno, Calif.-based Pinnacle Armor was more effective than service-issued Interceptor vests. But for more than a year, the Corps declined to follow suit. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,132837,00.html>

AT LEAST EVERYTHING IS GREAT FOR THE GUARD/RESERVE

DEPLOYMENT STRESS ON GUARD, RESERVE HAS LESSENERED, HALL SAYS

Gerry J. Gilmore - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 12, 2007 – The stress of repeated overseas deployments for National Guard and Reserve members has lessened in recent years, the Defense Department's reserve-component chief told a special commission today at a Capitol Hill hearing.

"We have relieved the stress on the (Guard and Reserve) force in the past couple of years," Thomas F. Hall, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, told members of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=32786>

OR IS IT?

GUARD NOT PREPARED FOR IRAQ

Associated Press - April 11, 2007

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Ohio's governor said Tuesday he is worried that National Guard troops who have been told to prepare for a possible deployment to Iraq won't have proper training and equipment.

"These men and women are going to be paying the price, I think, for failure to adequately plan, to predict, and it troubles me," Gov. Ted Strickland told National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

National Guard brigades in Ohio, Arkansas, Indiana and Oklahoma are being prepared to serve as replacement forces in the regular troop rotation for the war. It will be the second tour for several thousand of their troops.

"There are so many concerns that I have - the effect on employers, the effect upon families of these men and women - and I just think this is an example of the government not keeping faith with the men and women who have volunteered to serve in the Ohio National Guard," the Democratic governor said. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,131859,00.html>

U.S. ARMY PROSECUTIONS OF DESERTION RISE SHARPLY

Paul von Zielbauer - April 8, 2007

U.S. Army prosecutions of desertion and other unauthorized absences have risen sharply in the past four years, resulting in thousands more negative discharges and prison time for junior soldiers and combat-tested veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, military records show. The increased prosecutions are meant, in effect, to serve as a deterrent to a growing number of soldiers who might be looking for a way to avoid heading - or heading back - to Iraq, several U.S. Army lawyers said during interviews. The use of courts-martial for these violations, which before 2002 were treated mostly as unpunished nuisances, is a sign that active-duty forces are being stretched to their limits, said military lawyers and mental health experts.

"They are scraping to get people to go back, and people are worn out," said Thomas Grieger, a senior Navy psychiatrist. <More at: www.iht.com/articles/2007/04/08/news/awol.php>

U.S. TROOP DEATHS CLIMBING IN IRAQ

Shashank Bengali - McClatchy Newspapers - Apr. 16, 2007

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Over the past six months, American troops have died in Iraq at the highest rate since the war began, an indication that the conflict is becoming increasingly dangerous for U.S. forces even after more than four years of fighting. From October 2006 through last month, 532 American soldiers were killed, the most during any six-month period of the war. March also marked the first time that the U.S. military suffered four straight months of 80 or more fatalities. April, with at least 58 service members killed through Monday, is on pace to be one of the deadliest months of the conflict for American forces.

<More at: www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/17087215.htm>

CONGRESSIONAL REPORT: GROSS MISMANAGEMENT OF IRAQ FUNDS

Jason Leopold - truthout - 11 April 2007

A damning report issued last month by the nonpartisan research arm of Congress says the Department of Defense continues to overstate its financial needs, by tens of billions of dollars, to fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The agency also casts serious doubt on President Bush's statements that money to fund the war will dry up by the end of the month if his budgetary demands are not immediately met. The 45-page report, "[The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11](#)," prepared for Congress by the Congressional Research Service, warned lawmakers that before they release additional funds to the Pentagon for the Iraq war, they should first demand that Defense Department officials provide an accurate accounting of how the money is being spent. <More at: www.truthout.org/docs_2006/041107J.shtml>

THE FUNDS ARE NOT REALLY BEING MISMANAGED ~ THEY ARE JUST BEING USED TO TRAIN IRAQIS AT \$350,000 PER TRAINEE [DO THE MATH!]

US TO HELP IRAQ RECRUIT 40,000 TROOPS

Sun Apr 22, 2007

Iraq and the United States are to spend 14 billion dollars and recruit 40,000 new soldiers into the Iraqi armed forces in the next 18 months, a US military commander said Sunday. <More at: http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/afp/070422/usa/iraq_us_security>

"To initiate a war of aggression. . . is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole." - Nuremberg Tribunal

Our tribunal ~ Our judge ~ Our finding

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
4/27		St. Cloud, MN	Resource Fair	Lori Helget	320-656-6101
5/2	1100-1500	Marriott San Diego 333 West Harbor Drive San Diego, CA	Career Fair		619-234-1500
5/3-6		Veterans Park Warsaw, NC	Wall That Heals	Warsaw VFW Post 9810	
5/5-6		Memphis, TN	Resource Fair	Ovul Ince	901-523-8990
5/10-13		Franklin Community Park Franklin, KY	Wall That Heals	AMVET Ladies Auxiliary Post 110	
5/16		Las Vegas, NV	Stand Down	Shalimar Cabrera	702-429-7294
5/16	1100-1500	Jacksonville Marriott 4670 Salisbury Road Jacksonville, FL	Career Fair		904-296-2222
5/17		Los Angeles, CA	Resource Fair	Doris Nickelson	310-518-1855
5/17		Saint Paul, MN	Resource Fair	Kara Cornils	612-727-1355
5/17-20		AMVETS State Headquarters Springfield, IL	Wall That Heals	Illinois AMVETS Service Foundation	
5/23		Lansing, MI	Resource Fair	Kate Reed	517-484-4414
5/25-28		Bulger Park Melrose Park, IL	Wall That Heals	Veterans Park District	
5/30	1100-1500	Doubletree Hotel Tampa Westshore Airport 4500 West Cypress Street Tampa, FL	Career Fair		813 879-4800
6/8-10		Humboldt County Fairgrounds Ferndale, CA	Stand Down	Kim Hall	707-822-2175

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

SYSTEM SHORTCHANGING DISABLED VETS

Associated Press - April 13, 2007

WASHINGTON - The way the government rates service members' disabilities is inconsistent, and the Army might be shortchanging injured soldiers, the chairman of a special commission said Thursday.

Testifying before a Senate panel, retired Lt. Gen. James Terry Scott, chairman of the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission, detailed problems in the Pentagon and Veterans Affairs ratings systems. Critics contend the ratings are easily manipulated to limit disability payments and create undue confusion in a claims system already strained to the limit.

"It is apparent that service members are not well-served," Scott said at an unusual joint hearing of the Senate Armed Services and Veterans Affairs committees called to examine gaps in the system. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,132024,00.html>

ARMY LAWYER SLAMS DISABILITY RETIREMENT SYSTEM

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Apr 5, 2007

The Army disability retirement system stacks the deck against injured soldiers by forcing them to prove they have post-traumatic stress disorder, demanding physical evidence for traumatic brain injuries, and restricting access to rules and regulations they need to make their cases, said an Army lawyer who helps soldiers appeal their claims.

"I think the problems are systemic," said Steven Engle, head legal counsel for soldiers going through the disability physical evaluation system at Fort Lewis, Wash. "The rules are inequitable."

In some cases, he said, they may even be illegal.

And the cases that are coming to define the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder and musculoskeletal injuries — are the ones most affected by unfair or unclear rules coming from the service's top-level Physical Disability Agency, Engle said. <More at: www.airforcetimes.com/news/2007/04/military_disability_fortlewis_070416w/>

POLICY SHIFT CUT DISABILITY RETIREMENTS

Tom Philpott - April 20, 2007

Today's Disability Retirement Squeeze Began Years Ago

Wary of rising disability retirement costs, the Department of Defense under then-secretary Caspar Weinberger quietly sought and received an internal legal opinion that, to this day, tamps down the number of wounded or ill service members awarded military disability retirement.

The March 25, 1985, memo from the DoD office of general counsel, which only recently came to light, gave Defense health officials a green light to restrain military disability ratings without a change in law. <More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,132880,00.html>

DOD ANNOUNCES TROOP CARE IMPROVEMENTS

Associated Press - April 18, 2007

WASHINGTON - Under criticism for poor treatment of injured soldiers, the Pentagon announced new measures Tuesday to provide more health screenings, improve its record-keeping system and simplify an unwieldy disability claims system.

Testifying before a House panel, Michael Dominguez, principal deputy under secretary of Defense, and Major Gen. Gale Pollock, the Army's acting surgeon general, acknowledged a need for major changes in the outpatient treatment of wounded soldiers and veterans.

They expressed confidence in a new leadership team overseeing Walter Reed Army Medical Center following disclosures of shoddy treatment in February and urged lawmakers to be patient. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,132609,00.html>

VETS ARE HOME AND HOMELESS

Jonathan Curiel - Chronicle Staff Writer - April 15, 2007

After fighting in Iraq, some end up on streets

... On any given night, an estimated 100 to 300 vets who were part of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom (the government's name for its Afghanistan campaign) live in transient conditions, according to organizations that help homeless ex-GIs. These men and women who once proudly represented the U.S. military now live on the street, in shelters, in their cars, with their friends -- anywhere they can unload their belongings for a night or two or longer. The number may seem low, but homeless advocates worry that these wars will eventually produce tens of thousands of homeless vets, as the Vietnam War did.

<More at: www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=c/a/2007/04/15/INGO8P5G391.DTL>

MILITARY PAY SOARS

Associated Press - April 11, 2007

WASHINGTON - The struggle to entice Army Soldiers and Marines to stay in the military, after four years of war in Iraq, has ballooned into a \$1 billion campaign, with bonuses soaring nearly six-fold since 2003. [2008 Proposed Military Pay Charts]. The size and number of bonuses have grown as officials scrambled to meet the steady demand for troops on the battlefields in Iraq and Afghanistan and reverse sporadic shortfalls in the number of National Guard/Reserve Soldiers willing to sign on for multiple tours.

Besides underscoring the extraordinary steps the Pentagon must take to maintain fighting forces, the rise in costs for re-enlistment incentives is putting strains on the defense budget, already strapped by the massive costs of waging war and equipping and caring for a modern military. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,131857,00.html>

PENTAGON DIDN'T LIKE THIS 2005 STORY IN USA TODAY SOLDIERS' DIVORCE RATES UP SHARPLY

Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

The number of active-duty soldiers getting divorced has been rising sharply with deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

The trend is severest among officers. Last year, 3,325 Army officers' marriages ended in divorce — up 78% from 2003, the year of the Iraq invasion, and more than 3 1/2 times the number in 2000, before the Afghan operation, Army figures show. For enlisted personnel, the 7,152 divorces last year were 28% more than in 2003 and up 53% from 2000. During that time, the number of soldiers has changed little. <More at: www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-06-07-soldier-divorces_x.htm>

SO THEY COMMISSIONED THEIR OWN STUDY AND GOT THE RIGHT ANSWER MILITARY DIVORCE RATES STUDIED

Associated Press - April 13, 2007

WASHINGTON - Divorce in the nation's military was no higher after four years of war than it was in peacetime a decade earlier, despite the stress of long and repeated tours of duty. A yearlong study by Rand Corp. says divorces rose from 2.5 percent of military marriages in 2001 to 3 percent in 2005. But that is still short of a previous Pentagon theory that marriage breakups had been soaring due to the strain of fighting the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, lead researcher Benjamin Karney said Thursday. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,132079,00.html>

SHATTERED LIFE

Raquel Rutledge – Milwaukee Journal Sentinel - April 14, 2007

Michele McPherson loved being a soldier. But after superiors assaulted her in Iraq, her life was turned upside down.

She was a good soldier. The Army said so.

Military leaders decorated her with commendation, achievement and good conduct medals, and more than a handful of other service ribbons and badges in her first four years.

They sent her to Iraq with the 47th Forward Support Battalion at the start of the war. As a field medic, she was among the first on the scene to treat soldiers hit by roadside bombs, snipers or other wartime violence.

"I loved my job," Spc. Michele McPherson says. "I loved the military."

Then McPherson herself became a victim of another type of violence in Iraq. She was sexually assaulted by two U.S. Army sergeants, men she knew and trusted.

One held the door shut while the other pinned her on the ground, unbuttoned his pants and assaulted her. Those few minutes of Aug. 7, 2003, began the nightmare that now has the 25-year-old Janesville woman fighting to regain custody of her 2-year-old daughter, Katelyn. <More at: www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=591248>

POLICY CHANGE BOOSTS G.I. BILL ELIGIBILITY FOR SOME GUARD, RESERVE MEMBERS

Gerry J. Gilmore - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 17, 2007 – A recent Defense Department policy change widens the eligibility window for some Reserve-component troops who want to use their Montgomery G.I. Bill education benefits, a senior DoD official said here today.

The DoD policy now aligns with Department of Veterans Affairs rules, which say National Guard members and reservists are eligible to receive Montgomery G.I. Bill education benefits for the period covering the amount of time they served on active duty, plus four months, said Tom Bush, principal director for manpower and personnel within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

After studying the matter over the past few months, DoD agreed to align its policy with the VA's, Bush said during a joint Pentagon Channel/American Forces Press Service interview. DoD's previous policy, he said, only recognized the amount of active-duty time as applied to the G.I. Bill coverage period for reserve component members but still required the member to continue to serve in the Selected Reserve.

"The change, from the DoD perspective, is that the benefit now can be used by somebody that leaves the selected reserve for the amount of time that they've served on active duty, plus four months," Bush said. Guard and reserve members who attend regular drill training and meetings are considered part of the selected reserve.

The total amount of G.I. Bill coverage for reservists is still 36 months, Bush said. "So, if you've used part of that (G.I. Bill benefit) it may eat into that 36 months," he noted. <More at: www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=32832>

SOLDIER: HONOR TROOPS LIKE VA. TECH DEAD

Alisa Tang - Apr 23

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) - An Army sergeant complained in a rare opinion article that the U.S. flag flew at half-staff last week at the largest U.S. base in Afghanistan for those killed at Virginia Tech but the same honor is not given to fallen U.S. troops here and in Iraq.

In the article issued Monday by the public affairs office at Bagram military base north of Kabul, Sgt. Jim Wilt lamented that his comrades' deaths have become a mere blip on the TV screen, lacking the "shock factor" to be honored by the Stars and Stripes as the deaths at Virginia Tech were.

"I find it ironic that the flags were flown at half-staff for the young men and women who were killed at VT, yet it is never lowered for the death of a U.S. service member," Wilt wrote.

He noted that Bagram obeyed President Bush's order last week that all U.S. flags at federal locations be flown at half-staff through April 22 to honor 32 people killed at Virginia Tech by a 23-year-old student gunman who then killed himself.

"I think it is sad that we do not raise the bases' flag to half-staff when a member of our own task force dies," Wilt said. ...

"If the flags on our (operating bases) were lowered for just one day after the death of a service member, it would show the people who knew the person that society cared, the American people care." <More at:

<http://apnews.excite.com/article/20070423/D8OMCS882.html>

TWO "YOUTUBE" CLIPS WORTH VIEWING

Jim Lehrer News Hour - PBS

CARING FOR THE WOUNDED - WHO PAYS? PT1

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z264ONnitW8>, 6:17

CARING FOR THE WOUNDED - WHO PAYS? PT2

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8TIH5vCfmw>, 6:26

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF APRIL 18, 2007

This week, the Army, Navy and Air Force announced an increase, while the Marine Corps and Coast Guard had a decrease. The net collective result is 85 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 63,602; Navy Reserve, 6,338; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,172; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,489; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 302. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 80,903, 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/Apr2007/d20070418ngr.pdf.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 24 APRIL 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,333
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 4/23]	24,764
OTHER CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 4/23]	≥32,544
KILLED UK	145
KILLED OTHER COALITION	125
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	768
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 3/31]	673
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 46,529
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 68,289 [LANCET-720,461]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+ [LANCET- 1,296,830]

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	381
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 3/24]	6,334
KILLED COALITION	182
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	669
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

EX-OFFICERS BRIEF ON HUMANE TACTICS

Holly Ramer - Associated Press Writer - Apr 13

Four Democratic presidential candidates have agreed to attend private tutorials by retired military officers who say the war on terrorism can be won without sacrificing human rights.

The gathering, scheduled this weekend, was organized by the nonpartisan group Human Rights First and John Hutson, a retired rear admiral who served as the Navy's top lawyer. Starting Friday and continuing through Sunday, candidates will attend separate, hour-long meetings at Franklin Pierce Law Center, where Hutson serves as dean.

"We think it's important to talk to the candidates, one of whom may be the next president, so when they go out on the campaign trail they have the opportunity to speak from strength and a position of knowledge and familiarity," Hutson said.

... Several of the retired military officers said their goal was to emphasize that the United States should adhere to the Geneva Conventions when it comes to detaining and interrogating prisoners.

"There are many facets to this issue, but overshadowing all of them is a basic moral imperative to show the American people, and in fact the world, that the United States can wage and win the war on terrorism without sacrificing its overall value system and rule of law," said retired Gen. Charles Krulak, former commandant of the Marine Corps.

Marine Corps Gen. Joseph Hoar said he will urge the candidates to focus less on the detainees and their crimes and more on what it means to be an American.

"This is not about our adversaries. This is about who we are," said Hoar, former head of U.S. Central Command. "We're Americans. We stand for the rights of individuals and people who are captured. We don't torture them. We don't subject them to inhumane behavior."

The retired officers said they don't want to cast the discussion in a partisan light, although many of them have been vocal critics of the Bush administration's policies.

<More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070413/ap_on_el_pr/democrats_military&printer=1;_ylt=Ar.Z2aJy36eNSCayw9BlgJh24cA>

YET ANOTHER BOOK REVIEW

"ONE BULLET AWAY: THE MAKING OF A MARINE OFFICER" Nathaniel Fick

Nathaniel Fick can write! This book is an outstanding account of a recon platoon during the 2003 invasion, preceded by Fick's account of getting through OCS, Infantry School, and Recon School. A real page turner, and a welcome insight into the mind of one of today's soldiers. Here are a couple of quotes from April and May 2003:

When faced with the decision to buck the system and get medical help for two Iraqi boys who had been shot by US Marines after his headquarters had declared an area a free-fire zone and that all personnel in the zone were hostile.

"Pro-war. Anti-war. War for freedom. War for oil. Philosophical disputes were a luxury I could not enjoy. War was what I had. We didn't vote for it, authorize it, or declare it. We just had to fight it. And fighting it, for me, meant two things: winning and getting my men home alive. Alive, though, set the bar too low. I had to get them home physically and psychologically intact. They had to know that, whether or not they supported the larger war, they had fought their little piece of it with honor and had retained their humanity."

Quoting one of his men, Sgt Tony Espera, responding to Fick's assertion that Iraq was not going to become another Vietnam.

"Guerilla wars aren't fought from the sanctuaries with support from sugar mama countries. That's political science bullshit. They're fought from the mind. ...If these people don't want for themselves what we want for them, then this will be Vietnam. We'll get our pride and our credibility involved, and then we'll keep throwing money and men down the pit long after everybody else knows we're fucked. We'll leave, and Iraq will be even worse than the shit hole it was a month ago when we kicked down the door."

When contemplating sending out one of his team's on a night recon patrol – one which he would not be participating in.

"...When I sent my men out without me, the mission's rationale had to be ironclad. My litmus test was simple. If someone was killed, would I be able to visit his parents after the war and explain to them honestly why their son had died while working for me? People die in war. Every one of us in the all-volunteer military accepted that. But the death better not be senseless, the mission not unnecessary, the planning not shoddy, the equipment not inadequate."

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 ~ OTHER GIFTS

FOR TODAY'S SOLDIERS, I OFFER THEM A FEW SONGS FROM MY WAR [Ed]

MASTERS OF WAR

Bob Dylan ~ 1963

Come you masters of war
You that build all the guns
You that build the death planes
You that build the big bombs
You that hide behind walls
You that hide behind desks
I just want you to know
I can see through your masks
You that never done nothin'
But build to destroy
You play with my world
Like it's your little toy
You put a gun in my hand
And you hide from my eyes
And you turn and run farther
When the fast bullets fly
Like Judas of old
You lie and deceive
A world war can be won
You want me to believe
But I see through your eyes
And I see through your brain

Like I see through the water
That runs down my drain
You fasten the triggers
For the others to fire
Then you set back and watch
When the death count gets higher
You hide in your mansion
As young people's blood
Flows out of their bodies
And is buried in the mud
You've thrown the worst fear
That can ever be hurled
Fear to bring children
Into the world
For threatening my baby
Unborn and unnamed
You ain't worth the blood
That runs in your veins
How much do I know
To talk out of turn
You might say that I'm young
You might say I'm unlearned

But there's one thing I know
Though I'm younger than you
Even Jesus would never
Forgive what you do
Let me ask you one question
Is your money that good
Will it buy you forgiveness
Do you think that it could
I think you will find
When your death takes its toll
All the money you made
Will never buy back your soul
And I hope that you die
And your death'll come soon
I will follow your casket
In the pale afternoon
And I'll watch while you're lowered
Down to your deathbed
And I'll stand o'er your grave
'Til I'm sure that you're dead

AND A MEMORY OF WAR

GOODNIGHT SAIGON

Billy Joel 1982

We met as soul mates
On Parris Island
We left as inmates
From an asylum
And we were sharp
As sharp as knives
And we were so gung ho
To lay down our lives
We came in spastic
Like tameless horses
We left in plastic
As numbered corpses
And we learned fast
To travel light
Our arms were heavy
But our bellies were tight
We had no home front
We had no soft soap
They sent us Playboy
They gave us Bob Hope

We dug in deep
And shot on sight
And prayed to Jesus Christ
With all of our might
We had no cameras
To shoot the landscape
We passed the hash pipe
And played our Doors tapes
And it was dark
So dark at night
And we held on to each other
Like brother to brother
We promised our mothers we'd write
And we would all go down together
We said we'd all go down together
Yes we would all go down together
Remember Charlie
Remember Baker
They left their childhood
On every acre

And who was wrong?
And who was right?
It didn't matter in the thick of the fight
We held the day
In the palm
Of our hand
They ruled the night
And the night
Seemed to last as long as six weeks
On Parris Island
We held the coastline
They held the highlands
And they were sharp
As sharp as knives
They heard the hum of our motors
They counted the rotors
And waited for us to arrive
And we would all go down together
We said we'd all go down together
Yes we would all go down together

AND THE GREATEST SOLDIERS' CHORUS OF ALL

WE GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS PLACE

Animals ~ 1965

We gotta get out of this place
If it's the last thing we ever do

We gotta get out of this place
'cause girl, there's a better life for me and you