

SOUND OFF!



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THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 JUNE 2009

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

DC HAS AN INSCRIPTION PROBLEM

I think that I have finally figured out what is wrong in Washington DC, and why veterans and others can't get Congress's or the bureaucrats' attention.

It's the "Inscription Problem."

Our poor Congresspersons, all 535 of them, are surrounded by too many high-sounding inscriptions. These various quotations are there to inspire them to higher service, to inspire all of us to excellence, and to inspire even the unwilling to stand up for "America", "Americans", and the "American Way" – Ooops! I forgot "The American Dream."

The bureaucrats, with Congress as their example, but generally much more poorly paid, and perhaps a little less educated (although you can't tell it from any Congressperson's website or speeches), must surely be overwhelmed, poor things! I am sure that they consider all of these admonitions to be terribly inconvenient.

We can start over at the DVA building where the Armed Forces Committees, the 279,000 employees and 127,000 volunteers are charged by one A. Lincoln *"to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan"*.

Fairly clear language, I think, but it seems that when it is inscribed, that is when it is incised in stone, and placed way up there near the roofline, it sort of passes out of their ken, and they are forced to adopt something more local and understandable to guide their efforts.

Because they are all honorable people, and they do quasi-military things, they are rumored to have adopted the old military motto "Death Before Dishonor" in its original Latin form *"morta prima di disonore"*. Not wanting to seem to discriminate against non-Latin speakers, they unfortunately later mistranslated it to

"Death Before Disbursement." That made them happy and it truly fit their style of work to a "T". It also explains fairly clearly why unanswered veterans' claims have increased from 700,000 to almost a million in a little more than one year.

All of those hundreds of thousands of Congresspersons and civil servants are surrounded by really troublesome quotations. When one wishes to hide the workings of Government it doesn't help to have the inscription over in Madison Memorial Hall, **"Knowledge Will Forever Govern Ignorance: And A People Who Mean To Be Their Own Governours, Must Arm Themselves With The Power Which Knowledge Gives."**

Of course, that was before someone decided that the charge in this inscription would lead to transparency, and that didn't fit anyone in Washington's idea of Government, so they once again adopted a more useful inscription and on each desk they put the quotation from François de la Rochefoucauld, **"To know how to hide one's ability is great skill."** They really believe that and do a bang-up job of it, don't they?

While that one fit nearly everyone's idea of personal involvement, some preferred J.R.R. Tolkien's quote from *The Lord of the Rings*, **"Fair speech may hide a foul heart."** In fact, that one kind of resonates with me when I watch them work.

If they run and hide from Madison, Jefferson catches them on the West wall of the South Reading Room of the Library of Congress with, **"Educate And Inform The Mass Of The People. Enable Them To See That It Is Their Interest To Preserve Peace And Order, And They Will Preserve Them. Enlighten The People Generally, And Tyranny And Oppression Of**

The Body And Mind Will Vanish Like Evil Spirits At The Dawn Of Day.”

Our Washington friends prefer the simpler quote from Samuel Butler, **“Any fool can tell the truth, but it requires a man of some sense to know how to lie well.”** Their performance appraisals take that characteristic into full account with big marks for those who live up to the guidance of that quote.

These servants of ours never go on the National Mall because then they would have to face the inscription on the Western corner of the World War II Memorial where Harry Truman is quoted saying, **“Our Debt To The Heroic Men And Valiant Women In The Service Of Our Country Can Never Be Repaid. They Have Earned Our Undying Gratitude. America Will Never Forget Their Sacrifices.”**

When they head home at night, they try not to use the State Entrance at Union Station where is inscribed, **“Be Noble and the nobleness that lives in other men - sleeping but never dead – will rise in majesty to meet thine own .”** Instead they keep their eyes on the ground and remember a better quote when contemplating their own service – Eric Hoffer’s **“When cowardice is made respectable, its followers are without number both from among the weak and the strong; it easily becomes a fashion.”**

And in this new day, with “Change” in the air, it is important that they not look on the Roosevelt Memorial where is inscribed, **“The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man, or one party, or one nation. It must be a peace which rests on the cooperative effort of the whole world.”**

They avoid Arlington Cemetery where on the Monument to the Confederate Dead is inscribed, **“Not for fame or reward,
Not for place or for rank,
Not lured by ambition,
Or goaded by necessity,
But in Simple
Obedience to Duty
As they understood it,
These men suffered all,
Sacrificed all,
Dared all--and died.”**

Incomprehensible! How did someone let that get inscribed anywhere near the seat of Government?

When “Change” gets translated into “looking forward, not back”, the under-the-rug-sweepers have their heyday. They don’t have to contemplate lies and deceit, secrecy and wiretapping, preventive war and

torture. After all, if you keep your eyes on the ground you don’t have to read the inscription over the entry to the U.S. Supreme Court, **“Equal Justice Before the Law”**. Give that “equal justice” stuff to Charles Graner and Lyndie England, but forget Rumsfeld and Yoo. Equal doesn’t really mean equal does it?

The problem is, of course, that our history is not like some long-haul trucker’s load. It is not a trailer full of sins that you can disconnect and drive away from, leaving all of the unpleasantness behind. It is like a carbuncle on your butt that you have to deal with before you can begin to focus on moving forward.

Then too, when we “change” wrongs but don’t deal with them completely, to include the necessary legislation to make going back impossible, all of history’s ills just sit there, waiting to be renewed and reinvigorated by the next “change” agent. The new one might just like going back and doing all of that nastiness right this time, and who’s to stop him or her?.

Keep your eyes squarely on the ground, pursue a future which fails to resolve the past, and everyone can forget the inscription over the National Archives Building, which is from Prospero’s brother Antonio in *The Tempest*, **“What’s past is prologue”**.

Actually that quotation is non-threatening for them if you use their construction of it which is to “loosely” translate it to mean “Let bygones be bygones.” Of course “Bygones” aren’t, and the trouble with that view is that it is not what Shakespeare meant.

The full quotation is **“Wherefore what's past is prologue; what to come, in yours and my discharge.”** Which is to say that all that has gone before influences and forms how we will work out the future of our story. It means, then, that we must know and understand the past, and that it is our responsibility to take it into account and to deal with it – the good and the bad – the respectable and the disreputable – the comfortable and the hard – as the future and its responsibilities lie upon us. As one critic defined it, **““What's already happened merely sets the scene for the really important stuff, which is the stuff our greatness will be made on.”** Thus, we cannot avoid it.

In the end they and we can wander over to the Folger Shakespeare Library, where, on the fountain just below the statue of Puck is inscribed this quote from *The Midsummer Night’s Dream* –

“Lord, what fooles these mortals be!”

That doesn’t even have to be inscribed. We all wear it on our foreheads. **[Ed.]**

PLEASE SEE ADDITIONAL EDITORIAL COMMENT UNDER [“AFTERTHOUGHTS”](#)

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 www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/. Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

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!

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: The appeal was filed in December and now the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has ordered us to an Assessment Conference to determine if the case should be included in the court’s Mediation Program. Our appeal goes on, even though we hope that the new administration will address the focus of our case directly and with vigor.

Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court

9/25/2007 Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs

12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs

3/4/2009 Appeal will not be subject to Mediation

4/6/2009 Requested an extension to reply to the DVA response to our brief

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants’ Reply Brief filed

Here is a link to the legal [documents](#) on the lawsuit.

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

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

THOUGHTFUL LETTER FROM A SERVING MEMBER

On 04 MAY 09 Retired Adm. Jerome Johnson and three other retired officers, all founding members of the [Flag and General Officers for the Military](#), wrote [an op-ed](#). Their piece, about the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, appeared in the *Washington Post*. I heard Adm. Johnson on National Public Radio’s “Talk of the Nation” and drafted the letter below. I never sent it but the sentiments are unchanged.

Neal:

Thank you for a great program. I am not opposed to gays in the military but I would like to make a few comments.

You mentioned the success of racial integration as a model for success in open service and asked your guest why it is different. The All Volunteer Army differs from the 1947 army in one critical fact. There was a draft and service was compelled. Though no one was drafted in 1947, the draft resumed with passage of a new law in 1948 and lasted an entire generation. Soldiers had no choice in the matter and could not vote with their feet. In the parlance of contemporary service they had to "suck it up and drive on."

The success of integration took a generation. The barracks were dangerous places in the 1960s and 1970s. I enlisted in 1981 and caught the tail end of that (fortunately). While a success, integration was not accomplished with a hand wave as most people assume.

While it is easy for the two of us to make pronouncements, we will not live with the consequences. Straight soldiers will not bear any consequences. It is the homosexual soldiers who will ultimately endure the burden of progressive urges. I am not gay, just as I am not black. I will never share the pain of being a pioneer in the profession of arms. Therefore it is easy for me to take a stand, because I will never suffer for it.

Further, advocates for open service will never suffer for their principled position. While many people piously support open service, they will never serve. They will never endure the burden of military service because it is beneath their dignity. It was beneath them yesterday, it will be tomorrow and will be so forever. Open service will not increase recruitment from the ranks of those in favor of open service. Those folks will find another excuse.

No doubt, there will be a net drop in recruitment, retention and readiness. Without a draft there will certainly and absolutely not be an increase in recruiting to offset the departure of the homophobes. Look at those who endorse open service - they are not standing in line to join in significant numbers now. And they never will. In a time of economic hardship we can casually ignore this, but will it be a problem down the road? Perhaps.

We have gays in the military regardless. The fundamental question is: "Is the Army better off with or without homophobes?" Do the people who flee or reconsider service contribute or detract from the Army's ability to defend the nation? The mission of the Army is not to be warm and fuzzy, it is [to] defeat our nation's enemies. It can be dangerous, bloody and messy. So is the Army better off? Will our enemies fear us or merely endure us solely because we are less homophobic? I believe our enemies will not care.

As I prepare to deploy (again) I really don't care about color, faith, gender or sexual orientation. My concerns are move, shoot, communicate and survive on a complex battlefield where victory can only be achieved by winning the population. On this battlefield, lack of immaturity and being closed-minded will only prolong our efforts.

Can we afford to lose the homophobes? Perhaps we cannot afford to keep them.

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

CONGRESSIONAL PANEL TO ANALYZE VA HOSPITAL MISHAPS

Bill Poovey – 31 May 2009

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (AP) — A congressional panel will question Department of Veterans Affairs officials about mistakes that put patients at risk of possible exposure to HIV and other infectious body fluids at three VA hospitals.

The VA recommended more than 10,000 former VA patients in Miami, Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Augusta, Ga., get follow-up blood checks. Five have tested positive for HIV and 39 have tested positive for hepatitis.

The U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs oversight and investigations subcommittee has set a June 16 hearing in Washington to look into what caused the problems and what the VA has done to fix them. The VA's inspector general is currently investigating.

The subcommittee chairman, U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell D-Arizona, said Thursday in a phone interview that veterans who are testing positive for HIV and hepatitis, "whether it came from these improper procedures or not, the VA has a responsibility to take care of these patients."

A top VA doctor has said no one will ever know if the positive tests were caused by exposure to improperly operated or cleaned endoscopic equipment used in colonoscopies at Murfreesboro and Miami and to treat patients at the VA's ear, nose and throat clinic in Augusta. The VA has not denied the mistakes.

<More at: www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5h7Q_BB0OpslswSFhXiUtnrBRI5UgD98G1BC01

HOUSE AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO NATION'S VETERANS, MEN AND WOMEN IN UNIFORM

June 8, 2009

Washington, D.C. – On June 8, 2009, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) announced that H.R. 466 – The Wounded Veteran Job Security Act (Doggett) passed the House of Representatives.

H.R. 466 seeks to expand the protections of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act to include veterans with service-connected disabilities who seek an excused leave of absence from work to obtain medical attention.

Chairman Filner provided the following statement in support of H.R. 466: "Recognizing the special needs of injured veterans and openness to work with these men and women is a crucial step that allows our veterans the ability to heal and remain gainfully employed. Today we have thousands of business owners who have taken the initiative of providing our injured men and women with workforce protections of seniority, status, retention, and pay as well as other rights and benefits determined by employment. Unfortunately, there is still room for improvement and this bill seeks to bridge that gap. I thank my House colleagues for reaffirming our nation's commitment to care for our service members, veterans and their dependents by supporting H.R. 466." www.vawatchdog.org/09/hcva09/hcva060809-2.htm

TOO MANY UNMET NEEDS FOR AMERICA'S VETERANS: LOSING VETERANS TO OUR STREETS

June 3, 2009

Washington, D.C. - On Wednesday, June 3, 2009, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Bob Filner conducted a hearing to address America's commitment to end veterans' homelessness. The hearing focused on four specific programs operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA): Grant and Per Diem, outreach to veterans, Special Needs Grants, and prevention efforts.

According to recent VA reports, approximately one-third of the adult homeless population served in the Armed Services. Population estimates also suggest that about 131,000 veterans are homeless on any given night and perhaps twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year. Male and female veterans continue to be over-represented in the general homeless population. Specifically, male veterans were 1.4 times as likely to be homeless as male nonveterans while female veterans were between two and four times as likely to be homeless as their nonveteran female counterparts. Studies have shown an indirect connection between combat exposure and homelessness.

<More at: www.vawatchdog.org/09/hcva09/hcva060309-2.htm>

RETREAT – NEWS

ARMY CHIEF SAYS US READY TO BE IN IRAQ 10 YEARS

Tom Curley - May 26, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Pentagon is prepared to leave fighting forces in Iraq for as long as a decade despite an agreement between the United States and Iraq that would bring all American troops home by 2012, the top U.S. Army officer said Tuesday.

Gen. George Casey, the Army chief of staff, said the world remains dangerous and unpredictable, and the Pentagon must plan for extended U.S. combat and stability operations in two wars. "Global trends are pushing in the wrong direction," Casey said. "They fundamentally will change how the Army works." <More at: <http://apnews.excite.com/article/20090526/D98E7BL00.html>>

GENERAL ACCUSES WH OF WAR CRIMES

Dan Froomkin - Special to washingtonpost.com - June 18, 2008

The two-star general who led an Army investigation into the horrific detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib has accused the Bush administration of war crimes and is calling for accountability.

In his [2004 report](#) on Abu Ghraib, then-Major General Anthony Taguba concluded that "numerous incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees." He called the abuse "systemic and illegal." And, as [Seymour M. Hersh](#) reported in the New Yorker, he was rewarded for his honesty by being forced into retirement.

Now, in a [preface](#) to a [Physicians for Human Rights](#) report based on medical examinations of former detainees, Taguba adds an epilogue to his own investigation.

The new report, he writes, "tells the largely untold human story of what happened to detainees in our custody when the Commander-in-Chief and those under him authorized a systematic regime of torture. This story is not only written in words: It is scrawled for the rest of these individual's lives on their bodies and minds. Our national honor is stained by the indignity and inhumane treatment these men received from their captors.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/blog/2008/06/18/BL2008061801546_pf.html>

LEGAL EXPERTS: TOSS SOLDIER'S MURDER CONVICTION

Sean Murphy – 5 June 2009

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Oklahoma Attorney General Drew Edmondson and four former U.S. attorneys are among those pressing military officials to throw out an Army officer's murder conviction in the death of an Iraqi detainee.

University of Oklahoma President David Boren, a former U.S. senator, also is among more than two dozen prominent Oklahomans and legal experts who say 1st Lt. Michael Behenna of Edmond should get a new trial because prosecutors withheld evidence. They signed a letter to Army Secretary Pete Geren that was sent Tuesday; copies were sent to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Oklahoma's congressional delegation. Behenna was convicted in February by a military panel of seven officers at Fort Campbell, Ky., and was sentenced to 25 years in prison for the killing near Beiji, Iraq, in May 2008.

<More at: www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hisu_ExL9ldhq5RjoVCpF71z_2cQD98JG2A00>

US ARMY BASE SHUTS DOWN AFTER RISE IN SUICIDES

Dan De Luce - 29 May 2009

Washington - The commander of Fort Campbell army base in Kentucky has ordered a three-day suspension of regular duties to focus on a spike in suicides among his troops amid concern over a wider trend across the armed services.

The "stand-down" on Friday entered its third day at Fort Campbell, which is home to the famed 101st Airborne Division and has recorded the highest rate of suicide in the army, with at least 11 confirmed or suspected suicides.

Brigadier General Stephen Townsend announced the stand-down to focus attention on the problem after two more soldiers took their lives last week.

"It's bad for soldiers, it's bad for families, bad for your units, bad for this division and our army and our country and it's got to stop now. Suicides on Fort Campbell have to stop now," he told troops. <More at: www.truthout.org/052909A>

TOP SECRET CLEARANCES FLAWED AT PENTAGON

Shaun Waterman - The Washington Times - June 4, 2009

The Pentagon may have issued top-secret clearances last year to as many as one-in-four applicants who had "significant derogatory information" in their backgrounds, including a record of foreign influence or criminal conduct, a little-noticed government audit says. Flaws in the system for granting clearances to Defense Department staff and contractors pose a risk to national security, and the right tools to measure how well the process works are essential, said Rep. Anna G. Eshoo, California Democrat and chairman of a House intelligence subcommittee that oversees personnel and management issues.

"At present, we're basically operating on faith. This shouldn't be a faith-based process," Ms. Eshoo told The Washington Times. <More at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/04/pentagon-audit-finds-flaws-in-clearances/>>

UNCLE SAM DENYING SOLDIERS CITIZENSHIP

REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque - May 29, 2009

WASHINGTON - Loopholes in immigration policy are preventing U.S. military personnel from becoming citizens even after years of service to the country, reported a civil rights organization this Memorial Day.

"The reason I joined the military is because I love the country -- what it has done for me -- and I want to participate. I want to vote but I can't. It's like I got out and I was forgotten," explains Rene from Atlanta, a former U.S. marine who, after eight years of service, has struggled to obtain U.S. citizenship.

... "Without the contributions of immigrants, the military could not meet its recruiting goals and could not fill the need for foreign-language translators, interpreters, and cultural experts,"

... the bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining citizenship are preventing family members from accessing immigration benefits, keeping family members out of the United States altogether, and in some cases causing the deportation of military personnel or their family members, said attorney and Lieutenant Colonel Margaret D. Stock in Congressional testimony last May

<More at: www.commondreams.org/headline/2009/05/29-1>

VETS CORPS ESTABLISHED

President Obama recently signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, for HR 1401, which includes a provision by Rep. Phil Hare, Illinois Democrat, to create a Veterans Corps. The Veterans Engaged for Tomorrow Corps Act was co-authored by Mr. Hare and Rep. John Sarbanes, Maryland Democrat. It will establish a service corps, similar to AmeriCorps or Senior Corps, for veterans by veterans.

VET Corps Act of 2009 - Amends the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to direct the Corporation for National and Community Service to establish the Veterans Engaged for Tomorrow Corps (VET Corps), composed of veterans, retired military personnel, and their family members to: (1) help veterans, retired military personnel, and their family members obtain training, certification, or access to education or employers and otherwise to serve their communities through national and community service programs; (2) support existing outreach efforts to inform veterans about available services and benefits; (3) act as a clearinghouse for persons desiring to serve the veteran population; (4) coordinate with other departments and agencies to identify and address existing and future needs and challenges of veterans; and (5) provide veterans with opportunities to adjust to civilian life. Allows individuals to serve as VET Corps members for up to 24 months. Outlines VET Corps membership requirements and authorized benefits while performing or participating in VET Corps projects.

Directs the Corporation to make grants to veteran service organizations, nonprofit organizations, federal agencies, state or local governments, or institutions of higher education for establishing, operating, and supporting VET Corps projects.

Questions? Call 1-800-942-2677 or email questions@americorps.org

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/> - <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/index.asp>

Article: www.saukvalley.com/articles/2009/04/23/04080061/index.xml

RECRUITING CENTER GUNMAN TARGETED MILITARY

Jun 2, 2009

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. – Police describe it as a killing motivated by politics and religion: A Muslim convert upset with the U.S. military drove to a recruiting center and opened fire on two soldiers, fatally wounding one.

Monday's attack was not believed to be part of a broader scheme. Instead, authorities say Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad acted on his own when he drove to a shopping center in western Little Rock and began shooting.

"We believe that it's associated with his disagreement over the military operations," Police Chief Stuart Thomas said.

The two soldiers who were shot hadn't even seen combat in Iraq or Afghanistan. They completed basic training within the past two weeks and were not regular recruiters, said Lt. Col. Thomas F. Artis of the Oklahoma City Recruiting Battalion, which oversees the Little Rock office. <More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090602/ap_on_re_us/us_recruiters_shot_16/>

VA 'RELINQUISHED OVERSIGHT' OF IT PROJECTS UNDER AGREEMENT

Bob Brewin - 06/04/09

A Veterans Affairs Department internal report released on Thursday found numerous contracting irregularities resulting from an agreement VA signed with the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center to develop information technology systems, including a high-profile network to process veterans' educational benefits claims, which has a deadline for completion in August.

VA signed an interagency agreement with SPAWAR in November 2007 for the center to provide VA with system development, software programming and project management support. The department has issued 22 so-called amendments against the agreement, representing 30 IT projects, for a total cost of \$66 million, according to a [report](#) issued by the VA inspector general. Another \$73 million worth of IT work is in the pipeline.

... VA also did not know specifics about the agreement, including the fact that SPAWAR was conducting work outside the scope of the agreement and that the center had contracted out 87 percent of the work to outside contractors. These companies subcontracted out the work to other SPAWAR subcontractors, which increased costs because VA "must pay an additional layer of management fees and overhead," the IG said.

VA "could not tell us who was performing the work under the [agreement], how many people were providing services, or where they were located," the report noted. >More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20090604_8353.php>

JUSTICES DECLINE 'DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL' CASE

Stephen Dinan – Washington Times - June 9, 2009

In refusing to hear a challenge to the military's restriction on gay troops, the Supreme Court has put the issue back into President Obama's lap -- and gay rights advocates are starting to get angry over his slow pace in terminating "don't ask, don't tell."

Mr. Obama promised during the campaign to eliminate the policy, though he says he needs to act with Congress. But advocates say he could end the ban unilaterally or at the very least use his power as commander in chief to stop the dismissal of troops found in violation. <More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jun/09/justices-reject-dont-ask-dont-tell-challenge/>

MAN ROWING 3,700 MILES TO AID VETERANS

June 4, 2009

ST. LOUIS, June 4 (UPI) -- Adventurer Dan Cook says rowing 3,700 miles through U.S. rivers to increase awareness for disabled war veterans has been a "challenge."

The St. Louis (Mo.) Post-Dispatch said Thursday Cook, who stopped in St. Louis this week during his rowing journey, began his trip on April 6 in Montana and remains driven to complete his goal.

"It's an incredible challenge, but the people I've met along the way have made it worth it," Cook said.

<More at: www.upi.com/Top_News/2009/06/04/Man-rowing-3700-miles-to-aid-veterans/UPI-39011244137708/>

ANOTHER "SUPPORT THE TROOPS" STORY

LOCAL BUSINESSMAN INDICTED FOR DEFRAUDING DISABLED IRAQ WAR VETERAN

June 8, 2009

SAN ANTONIO – Bexar County has indicted Paul D. Coleman, 42, for allegedly defrauding a "100% disabled Iraq War Veteran." Sean Thomas, 28, was bilked out of \$85,000 according to D.A. Susan D. Reed.

Her office says that Coleman "...made material misrepresentations and failed to disclose relevant facts..." when he sold stock and other securities to Thomas. The Iraq War vet had gotten the money from the U.S. Army under the Wounded Warrior Program because of his combat injuries.

<More at: www.woai.com/news/local/story/Local-businessman-indicted-for-defrauding/oWL2SdpY0EyBOUCedi3sYw.csp>

TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
6/11-6/14		Ogden Park Wilmington, DE	The Wall That Helas	Chapter 11 DAV	
6/11		Virginia Beach Convention Center 1000 19th Street, Virginia Beach, VA	Mid-Atlantic Regional Career Event		Register
6/15	1100- 1400	Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza 350 West Mart Cntr Dr. Chicago, IL	Chicago Career Fair		Register
6/19		Worcester, MA	Resource Fair	Joe Boylan	508-791-0956 x-127
6/27		Lauderhill, FL	Resource Fair	Gerald Peterkin	954-792-4000 x-231
7/9	1730	Marines' Memorial Theater, 2nd Floor, 609 Sutter Street, San Francisco	George P. Schulz Lecture Series – GEN David Petraeus	World Affairs Council of Northern California	\$10 members \$25 non-members
7/27-8/2		Galt House Hotel, 140 N Fourth St Louisville, KY 40202	Vietnam Veterans of America Biennial Convention	VVA	
7/30-8/3		Angela Center Santa Rosa, CA	Retreat for OIF/OEF Veterans and their families	Coming Home Project	Free of charge Apply

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

CRISIS AT THE VA AS BENEFITS CLAIMS BACKLOG NEARLY TOPS ONE MILLION

Jason Leopold - The Intelligence Daily - June 1st, 2009

During the past four months, the Department of Veterans Affairs backlog of unfinished disability claims from grew by more than 100,000, adding to an already mountainous backlog that is now close to topping one million.

The VA's claims backlog, which includes all benefits claims and all appeals at the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Board of Veterans Appeals at VA, was 803,000 on Jan. 5, 2009. The backlog hit 915,000 on May 4, 2009, a staggering 14 percent increase in four months. The issue has become so dire that veterans now wait an average of six months to receive disability. <More at: www.inteldaily.com/news/173/ARTICLE/10859/2009-06-01.html>

MEMORIAL DAY CELEBRATIONS CLOAK VETERAN BENEFITS TRAVESTY

James W. Breedlove - The Truth Clinic - 2 June 2009

This past Memorial Day weekend, Americans gathered with family, friends, and neighbors to celebrate the first holiday of a new summer. But, as President Barack Obama reminded us in his Memorial Day address, this is not only a time for celebration, it is also a time to reflect on the meaning of this holiday; to pay tribute to those who've fallen in defense of our country in the 234 years since the first American soldier died in the revolutionary rebellion and to remember the servicemen and women who are currently deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world.

Some 43 million Americans have served in our wars, 655,000 have died in battle and more than 1.4 million were wounded. In the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, 4,963 Americans have given their lives and an estimated 34,000 others have been wounded.

But, these are just the numbers— to most, just meaningless statistics. Behind each of these numbers is a face and a name and behind each name is a loved one who has been inalterably impacted by what their service member has undergone. Yet after all the speeches, parades, laying of wreaths and sounding of taps in tribute to the many sons and daughters that paid the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedom and democracy there is still a dark shadow of dishonor lurking behind America's celebration of Memorial Day 2009.

President Obama recognized this in his Memorial Day tribute when he said, "All too often in recent years and decades, we, as a nation, have failed to live up to the responsibility to serve them as well as they serve us. We have failed to give them the support they need or pay them the respect they deserve. That is a betrayal of the sacred trust that America has with all who wear—and all who have worn—the proud uniform of our country." <More at: www.frostillustrated.com/full.php?sid=5778>

AT WAR WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

Isaías Alvarado - New America Media/La Opinion, News Report - Jun 05, 2009

"It's not easy to find work."

When Ivan Villarreal, a 25-year-old Navy veteran, says this sentence, it seems to refer to veterans' losing battle against unemployment.

Laid off from a Los Angeles tow truck company where he worked for nearly four year due to the current economic crisis, Villarreal is putting into practice what he learned in the military: Never give up.

"Employers aren't returning phone calls, and when I call back they tell me not to bother them," said Villarreal. He is one of the 170,000 veterans unemployed in February, according to national figures from the Department of Labor.

Tired of filling out electronic application forms, knocking on doors, looking for people he knows and collecting unemployment checks, Villarreal recalled the time when he left the military – where he served for four years – in September 2005, and no company would hire him. <More at: http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=6d55931b862e225c4e28378e30e4c782>

BONUS PROGRAM REPLACES NATIONAL GUARD STOP-LOSS

May 31, 2009

Army National Guard Soldiers who deploy on or after September 1, 2009 will no longer be affected by involuntary STOP-LOSS. STOP-LOSS is a controversial program that allows the military to involuntary extend a member's enlistment if they are selected for deployment. The Army is replacing the Army National Guard program with a voluntary extension program that will offer a cash bonus for eligible Soldiers who elect to extend their enlistment in order to deploy.

<http://usmilitary.about.com/b/2009/05/31/bonus-program-replaces-national-guard-stop-loss.htm>

CREDITORS USE LOOPHOLE TO SEIZE PROTECTED BENEFITS

Stephen Ohlemacher - Associated Press - June 02, 2009

Washington (AP) - Bill collectors are exploiting a legal loophole to seize Social Security and veterans' benefits even though federal law is supposed to protect the payments from creditors.

Lawmakers from both parties who have been pressing the Treasury Department for years to close the loophole with new regulations are growing impatient. The Obama administration is now promising action but has offered no timetable for developing the new rules.

Federal law has long protected Social Security and veterans benefits from most creditors, with a few exceptions for child support, alimony, unpaid federal taxes and debts to other federal agencies. But creditors have been seizing the payments anyway by getting court orders to freeze and garnish bank accounts that receive the benefits through direct deposit.

<More at: www.cnsnews.com/public/content/article.aspx?RsrcID=48983>

HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EXPANSION

American Forces Press Service - May 14, 2009

WASHINGTON – Vice President Joe Biden today announced the Defense Department's plan to expand its housing assistance program with \$555 million devoted to servicemembers forced to sell their homes at a loss due to the country's struggling housing market.

... The funds are allocated to provide benefits to military and civilian employees, according to a specific priority order, who suffered housing financial losses since 2006. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/housing-assistance-program-expansion.html>

OBAMA'S CRDP PLAN WOULD HELP 103,000 DISABLED RETIREES

Tom Philpott - May 21, 2009

As reported here last week, President Obama has asked Congress to phase in "concurrent receipt" for all Chapter 61 retirees – those who received a disability retirement from the Department of Defense.

This week we explain more details of the plan which, if enacted, would boost pay for 103,000 veterans by more than \$2 billion through 2014.

Concurrent receipt means being able to receive both VA disability compensation and military retired pay earned for years served. For many decades, retired pay had been reduced by the amount of disability pay.

<More at: www.military.com/features/0.15240.191302.00.html>

HEALING HIDDEN WOUNDS

National Defense University Article

America's returning veterans of Operations *Iraqi Freedom* and *Enduring Freedom* are in the midst of the largest mental health crisis since the Vietnam War. The Department of Defense (DOD) is undergoing a "full court press" to address this problem. A review of recent studies reveals that hundreds of thousands of war veterans manifest combat stress responses that require identification and treatment as early as possible to reduce more serious and long-lasting effects of combat deployments.

These studies suggest that the *length* of combat tours, *number* of repeated tours, and *time* between deployments have a significant impact on the psychological health of the military force.² Moreover, the direct combatants are not the only ones who are suffering from these hidden wounds.

<More at: www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq_pages/editions/i54/20.pdf>

VETERAN STIGMA: "WHAT DOES MY COUNTRY THINK OF ME?"

Luis Carlos Montalván - Freelance Journalist Veteran - June 4, 2009

As if to pour salt on the physical and psychological wounds of millions of America's veterans, a recent trend has emerged in both public pronouncements and privately held attitudes that suggests that veterans returning from the 'long wars' in Iraq and Afghanistan pose a security risk to potential employers, fellow workers, and workplace patrons.

"I cannot be open about my post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with prospective employers in light of the Homeland Security debacle," says former Army Sgt. and Iraq veteran Steve Kraft. "It's like a scarlet letter."

The "debacle" Sgt. Kraft refers to means comments made by Janet Napolitano, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), citing a section of an April 7, 2009, DHS Report titled "Disgruntled Military Veterans" to the effect that "DHS assesses that right-wing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize returning veterans...suffering from the psychological effects of war."

"Having been singled out by the media for attention, Napolitano's statement surely discourages would-be employers from considering hiring veterans applying for jobs, especially in an uncertain economy."

<More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/luis-carlos-montalvan/veteran-stigma-what-does_b_211530.html>

MILITARY SPOUSES SEEK RESIDENCY BENEFITS

Kimberly Hefling – 9 June 2009

SPRINGFIELD, Va. (AP) — Don't expect a rush order if you call Joanna Williamson's jewelry business. She's a military spouse, and it's moving season.

About 800,000 service members move each year — nearly half during the summer. Moving is a ritual repeated nearly every three years on average for military families.

It's also one that Williamson and other military spouses say could be made easier.

They are asking Congress to let military spouses opt to claim the same state of residence as their wives or husbands, who are allowed by law to keep their original residency as they relocate.

Having that option, the spouses say, would prevent many hassles associated with every move, such as obtaining a new driver's license and reregistering to vote. In some cases, it would eliminate the need for couples to file separate tax returns and lower the income taxes that some spouses pay.

<More at: www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jQGhQMw1MFON7acAvqN6SJKnpeqAD98MAEH00>

NEW SOLDIER-DADS GET ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE, ARMY SAYS

Jacqueline M. Hames - Jun 2, 2009

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, June 2, 2009) -- The Army wants Soldier-dads to know there is a new paternity leave policy available to them and spread the word to military bloggers at the Pentagon today.

The policy, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush Oct. 14, 2008, allows new dads up to 10 consecutive days of administrative leave after the birth of a child.

<More at: www.army.mil/news/2009/06/02/22007-new-soldier-dads-get-administrative-leave-army-says/>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2009

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,274 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,311
WOUNDED US [6/6/09]	31,342
OTHER US CASUALTIES [6/6/09]	≥37,512
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [6/6/09]	185
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [6/9/09]	≥ 100,786 - 668,051
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [11/9/08]	≥ 400K – 1.374M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,803 DAYS)

KILLED US	702
WOUNDED US [6/6/09]	2,979
OTHER CASUALTIES US [5/2/09]	8,034
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [5/2/09]	32
KILLED COALITION	474
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 11,017
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	≥ 7,373
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$676,723,099,457
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$189,709,532,826

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

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF MAY 26, 2009

This week the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced an increase, while the Army announced a decrease. The net collective result is 455 fewer reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may

activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 109,076; Navy Reserve, 6,562; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 15,386; Marine Corps Reserve, 9,199; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 758. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 140,981, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2009/d20090526ngr.pdf>

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

Recently you received our Bulletin #26 discussing the charity event that was held at the National Veterans Administration Medical Center in West Los Angeles. This "Afterthought" follows up on that Bulletin.

On a site called "Socialite Life: Gossip is Served" <http://socialitelife.celebuzz.com> you can see what is really important in life. Specifically, at http://socialitelife.celebuzz.com/archive/2009/06/08/celebs_gather_for_a_time_for_heroes_event_-_remains_of_the_day.php you can see a marvelous collection of "celebrity" pictures. Incidentally, all that green stuff in the background, you know, trees and grass - well that's part of the West LA National Veterans Home, as are the buildings.

The iron fence you see is one that the VA put approximately \$1,000,000 bucks into to save the sensibilities of the folks in Brentwood who were aesthetically shocked that the VA home might lower their real estate values. The police car that you see is a federal vehicle belonging to those VA security police who chase veterans away every Sunday afternoon from the fence surrounding the facility.

So on the weekend on which we commemorated the 65th Anniversary of D-Day, you could spend \$100,000 dollars and take 24 friends to see an 18 year old (Miley Cyrus) sing something which I am sure was comprehensible to the children, and two of your kids got to go on stage and stand in the wings.

Oh the burden of celebrity! In case you are planning on attending the next one, here is the price list.

CONCERT ONLY:	Seating is on a first-come, first-serve basis	\$200
Reserved:		
Child ticket		\$250
Adult ticket		\$1,000
Friend:	6 individual tickets "Friend" recognition in special section of souvenir program, signage at event	\$10,000
Sponsor:	8 individual tickets "Sponsor" recognition in special section of souvenir program, signage at event	\$15,000
20 for 20 Committee:	10 individual tickets "20 for 20 Committee" recognition in special section of souvenir program, signage at event	\$20,000
Patron:	12 individual tickets "Patron" recognition in special section of souvenir program, signage at event	\$25,000
Co-Chair Committee:	16 individual tickets Special backstage meet-and-greet for four with superstar Miley Cyrus "Benefactor" recognition in special section of souvenir program, signage at event	\$50,000
Angel:	Special backstage meet-and-greet for four with superstar Miley Cyrus Side-stage access for two children during the concert 24 individual tickets "Angel" recognition in special section of souvenir program, signage at event	\$100,000

Eisenhower Ave. runs directly through the facility and is one of the main East-West roads. The day before the "Heroes" event, on Saturday, 6 June, instead of honoring General of the Army Dwight Eisenhower for the success of D-Day and ultimately for the victory in Europe and lining this street with flags, the avenue was blocked for a bicycle race for the annual AIDS ride from San Francisco. Instead of maybe setting out a beer or two and barbecuing a burger at least for the veterans who live at the facility, some of whom may have participated in D-Day, they set out stands selling condoms and feel-good body lotions.

As Rachel Maddow would say, "One more thing."

Veterans in the home and VA employees were threatened with being ticketed and having their cars towed if they left them in the way of this bicycle ride (I have the flyer if you don't believe me.)

Just so you can share in this wonderful use of our national Veterans home, here are some pictures (low quality, but so are many of the subjects) of the Sunday affair. I have no idea who these people are except one might be Mark Wahlberg. I am sure all of these people are veterans of something, but probably not of war or military service.



And if I could include the pictures from the Saturday bike ride (they are huge) you could see that neither the street nor the parking lot belongs to veterans on this important day..

In all of this, someone really has a tin ear. On a veterans facility, at events which generally excluded veterans because of cost or inclination, one event is dedicated to "Heroes" (not military), and the other supported a mobile AIDS education facility called "POW" (Prevention on Wheels). The titles would be ironic if the situation did not make them just shameful.

Just one last comment. Nothing in all of this is against either the Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS foundation, or the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. I believe that both are more than worthy causes. But if all you are trying to prove is "Them That Has Gets", then you have done it in spades.

We can't protect our land while it is being given away piecemeal to any wealthy Brentwood resident who wants it. The VA doesn't just stand idly by, they encourage it. Our Representatives don't stand idly by either: they use these giveaways and events to solicit campaign funds.

Will someone please remember the veterans?!

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

PROGRAM TO LET OUT-OF-STATE VETS ATTEND W.VA. COLLEGES FOR FREE

Alison Knezevich - Staff writer - June 1, 2009

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Starting in August, veterans from across the country will be able attend college in the Mountain State for free.

<More at: <http://wvgazette.com/News/200906010667>

NOTICE

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

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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

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