

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 22 THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 JULY 2007

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

WHEN DOES THE FAIRNESS START?

John Rawls, in his *“Justice as Fairness”*, posits a social contract that is arrived at by equal partners, equally informed, who operate behind a “veil of ignorance”. He means by this that they write the contract – the rules – so that they apply to all equally, without knowing where they or their constituents will fall in the basic social order when the contract takes effect.

Thus, a person writes fair rules with his contractual partners and does not know until he leaves the meeting whether he will be wealthy or poor, white or black, tall or short, male or female, religious or secular, straight or gay, abled or disabled, etc. – in other words, he or she is ignorant of his or her own position in society while writing the rules. This is of course an idealistic view and cannot practically be true completely, but it is the idea behind what most of us believe, or at least wish the rules to be, both as written and as executed.

Maybe that’s what got many tempers up over this last few weeks when we saw a man convicted of perjury in a case that involved a suspicion of treason having his sentence commuted to fines and no prison, while throughout the country, daily, men and women are going to prison for extended periods for the mere possession of small amounts of certain drugs, and for other minor felonies.

Recently we have seen a young marine called back from civilian life to have his honorable discharged stripped from him – adversely affecting his employment possibilities for the rest of his life, because he allegedly violated an active duty regulation when not on active duty. Yet the perjurer gets off scot free, with his fines undoubtedly paid by some 527, and probably with at least one book contract and a high-paying job at some foundation for the rest of his life.

The score: **Free speech 0 – Abetting treason 1.**
The real score: **Fairness 0 – Privilege 1**

We veterans live in a nation where insufficient funds can be found to take care of those who have taken on the heaviest burden in defending our society, while those who exploit our society are festooned with subsidies and tax breaks. Those who go keep on paying, while those who stay behind rake it in.

The administration, which operates under policies established by one who is also Commander-in-chief of the forces, states repeatedly that

veterans’ benefits are too expensive, and fights to increase medical co-payments and prescription costs for veterans because otherwise “the benefits will become unaffordable”. That same administration fights to protect inherited money and states that the tax burden on the already wealthy is unfair, supporting such things as taxing the interest on the money your wealthy Daddy left you at a lower rate than ordinary citizens’ wages and salaries.

The Congress does little better since it fails to stand up for fairness for veterans other than occasionally passing a resolution praising their sacrifice. Pardon me if I don’t cheer.

Most recently both the administration and Congress have been saying that serving military and veterans should not complain; after all, enlisted military salaries are supposedly at the sixtieth percentile for their age group, which means that a sergeant makes about what a journeyman mechanic makes. No mention of the difference in risk – the difference in lifetime earnings – the sacrifice of serving military and their families – the deadly danger for serving military on the one hand, and the possible blister the mechanic might get. Some veterans, not all, get medical benefits. Administration executives, congresspersons and their staffs, and their many friends all get those benefits. Some veterans who have served for many years get pensions – not the kind of pensions that the friends of the administration and Congress get, but pensions nonetheless.

All societies – all nations have histories of neglecting the veteran. He or she is their “hero” when there is some fighting to do, and he or she is their “burden” when the fighting is done. But lately it has been getting worse. We are in a non-war – a battle for which the purpose cannot be stated, and for which the objective, thus the end point, cannot be defined. At the least we should take care of those who fight and their families. No memorials – no parades – no speeches – no promises. Action! Purpose! Above all – fairness!

“For it’s Tommy this, an’ Tommy that, an’ “Chuck him out, the brute!”

**But it’s “Saviour of ‘is country” when the guns begin to shoot;
An’ it’s Tommy this, an’ Tommy that, an’ anything you please;
An’ Tommy ain’t a bloomin’ fool -- you bet that Tommy sees!”**

Rudyard Kipling – “Tommy”

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

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

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE AT WWW.VUFT.ORG.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

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

LAWMAKERS PUSH FOR BETTER VETERANS CARE

Hope Yen - Associated Press Writer - June 29, 2007

Congress members on Friday urged a presidential panel to use its sway with President Bush to finally solve years of problems with veterans health care. In its last public hearing before considering recommendations, the nine-member Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors heard testimony about legislative efforts to fix gaps in the system.

Many of the commissioners said they wanted to ensure that families could have free access to private medical care if no adequate government facility is available in their home areas. They also pledged to cut through a bureaucracy that has stymied significant improvements to veterans care for nearly 10 years. <More at: <http://www.sacbee.com/838/v-print/story/248754.html>>

AKAKA LEGISLATION RE-OPENS VA SYSTEM TO ALL VETERANS

June 27, 2007

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, announced the Committee's passage today of a key provision of S. 1233, the Traumatic Brain Injury and Other Health Programs Enhancement Act of 2007, that would allow Priority 8 veterans back into the VA health care system.

<More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/07/scva07/scva062707-2.htm>

NOTE: Priority 8 veterans are middle-income veterans with no service-connected disabilities. For VA's state-by-state geographical means test thresholds that determine Priority 8 status, go to: <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/Library/pubs/GMTIncomeThresholds/>>

LEGISLATION WOULD SIMPLIFY VETERANS BENEFITS

Nicole Fuller - Sun Reporter - July 2, 2007

Bill lets those with 100% disability rating get Social Security benefits early

U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes of Maryland has introduced legislation that will streamline the process in which disabled war veterans receive government benefits. <More at: http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/politics/bal-sarbanes0702_0_4785492_story?coll=bal-local-headlines>

SENATOR SEEKS ONE MONTH HOME FOR EVERY MONTH SPENT DOWNRANGE

Stars and Stripes - Lisa Burgess - July 05, 2007

ARLINGTON, Va. — A lawmaker whose own Marine son has deployed to Iraq is pressing for a law guaranteeing all servicemembers one month at home for every month they are deployed. Freshman Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., himself a former Marine, will on Monday introduce an amendment to the 2008 defense budget that proposes 1-to-1 dwell time for all U.S. military personnel, his spokeswoman, Jessica Smith, told Stars and Stripes on Monday.

<More at: <http://stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=54708&archive=true>>

PELOSI: IRAQ PULLOUT VOTE SET FOR JULY

Jennifer Yachnin - Roll Call - 02 July 2007

House Democratic leaders plan to force another vote on war policy in July, when lawmakers will take up a proposal that would end military involvement in Iraq by the spring of 2008, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) announced Friday. ... According to the Speaker, the measure will instruct the Defense secretary to begin the redeployment of military personnel from Iraq within 120 days of the bill's passage and would require that withdrawal to be completed by April 1, 2008.

<More at: http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/070507L.shtml>

RETREAT – NEWS

MARINES' REQUEST FOR LASERS MORPHS INTO 2-YEAR BATTLE

Alicia Mundy - Seattle Times Washington bureau - June 24, 2007

WASHINGTON — Two years ago, Marines in Iraq asked for an emergency order of 200 nonlethal lasers to keep innocent Iraqis from being killed when they fail to stop at U.S. military checkpoints. When the lasers hadn't arrived by last fall, a frustrated lieutenant colonel named Marty Lapierre dipped into a special fund and requisitioned 28 of the devices, which temporarily blind — and therefore stop or redirect — unwelcome drivers. But those handheld lasers, called the CHP [Laser Dazzler](#), didn't make it to the troops, either.

Just before Christmas, Marine generals told Lapierre and Marine science adviser Franz Gayl to shelve the lasers because they were unsafe — even though the Army and Special Forces were using them. Instead, in March, Marine brass shipped a competing laser called the GBD-III, or [Green Beam](#), which is made by B.E. Meyers & Co. in Redmond. Gayl and some Marine officers said the Dazzler, with its wider beam, is much better for the Marines' purposes. E-mails from Lapierre and others question why it took nearly two years to get lasers to Marines in Iraq, and why the Pentagon second-guessed field commanders and rejected the device they wanted. <More at: http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2003760511_dazzler24m.html>

MIXED MESSAGES ON THE MILITARY FRONT

US MILITARY BETS ALL ON IRAQ CAMPAIGN

Jim Mannion - Jun 24, 2007

Under mounting political pressure at home, the US military is betting all that a summer-long campaign against Al-Qaeda in Iraq will leave it in a position to begin drawing down US troops by early next year. General David Petraeus, the US commander in Iraq, has only three months to bring about a major change in security conditions, a goal that has eluded all his predecessors. Should he fall short, analysts say, an angry Congress is almost certain to act to take matters into its own hands.

<More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20070624/ts_afp/usiraqmilitaryforces>

PETRAEUS: HIGH PROFILE ATTACKS EXPECTED

Associated Press - July 08, 2007

BAQOUBA, Iraq - Sunni extremists may try a series of high-profile attacks ahead of a September report to Congress on progress in Iraq, the top U.S. commander said Saturday, recalling the Tet offensive that torpedoed support for the Vietnam War.

"We expect they will try this - pull off a variety of sensational attacks and grab the headlines to create a `mini-Tet,'" Gen. David Petraeus told The Associated Press.

The 1968 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Tet offensive failed to achieve most of its tactical goal but it shattered political support for the Vietnam War among the U.S. public. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,141577,00.html>>

US IRAQ CHIEF WARNS OF LONG WAR

BBC NEWS – July 9, 2007

The head of US forces in Iraq, Lt Gen David Petraeus, has told the BBC that fighting the insurgency is a "long term endeavour" which could take decades. Speaking to the BBC's John Simpson in Baquba, Gen Petraeus said there was evidence that the recent troops surge was producing gains on the ground. But he warned that US forces were engaged in a "tough fight" which will get "harder before it gets easier". <More at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6285156.stm>

IRAQI WARNS OF GRAVE RESULTS IF U.S. PULLS OUT

Stephen Farrell - July 9, 2007

BAGHDAD, July 9 — The Iraqi foreign minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, warned today that an early American withdrawal from Iraq could bring on an all-out civil war and regional conflict, pointedly telling the United States that it had responsibilities to continue lending support to the Baghdad government. Mr. Zebari also asserted that Iraq's neighbor Turkey had massed 140,000 troops near his country's northern border and urged it to resolve differences with dialogue, not through force.

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/09/world/middleeast/09cnd-iraq.html>>

THEY NEED MORE ARMS??

IRAQI POLITICIANS CALL ON CIVILIANS TO ARM THEMSELVES

Robert H. Reid - Associated Press Writer - 09 July 2007

Prominent Shiite and Sunni politicians called on Iraqi civilians to take up arms to defend themselves after a weekend of violence that claimed more than 220 lives, including 60 who died yesterday in a surge of bombings and shootings around Baghdad.

The calls reflect growing frustration with the inability of Iraqi security forces to prevent extremist attacks. <More at: http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article2747710.ecs#2007-07-09T00:00:32-00:00>

UTTER CONFUSION ON THE POLICY FRONT

STORY WRONG ABOUT IRAQ PULLBACK, WHITE HOUSE SAYS

CNN.com/Politics – 9 July 2007

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- President Bush's spokesman on Monday denied a published report that described intensifying debate among White House officials over whether to begin a gradual pullback of U.S. troops in Iraq. White House spokesman Tony Snow said a story in The New York Times about a proposed "gradual withdrawal" of forces in "high-casualty neighborhoods in Baghdad and other cities" is "way ahead of the facts."

"There is no intensifying discussion about reducing troops," said Snow during his daily briefing for reporters. He said the so-called "surge," or increase of nearly 30,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, has been complete for only a matter of weeks.

"The surge is not an open-ended commitment, it's not an occupation," said Snow. "It's a surge ... to create space so that we can achieve as swiftly as possible some of those basic necessities for the Iraqi people to be able to step up and stand in the lead. And then at that point, the Americans step back into less visible, more support positions." <More at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/07/09/congress.iraq/index.html>>

BUSH PLANS TO STRESS NEXT PHASE IN IRAQ WAR

Peter Baker and Karen DeYoung - Washington Post Staff Writers - July 10, 2007; A01

President Bush, facing a growing Republican revolt against his Iraq policy, has rejected calls to change course but will launch a campaign emphasizing his intent to draw down U.S. forces next year and move toward a more limited mission if security conditions improve, senior officials said yesterday. ... Bush plans to lay out what an aide called "his vision for the post-surge" starting in Cleveland today to assure the nation that he, too, wants to begin bringing troops home eventually. <More at:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/09/AR2007070902031_pf.html>

OFFICIAL: IRAQ GOV'T MISSED ALL TARGETS

Anne Flaherty and Anne Gearan - July 9, 2007

WASHINGTON (AP) - A progress report on Iraq will conclude that the U.S.-backed government in Baghdad has not met any of its targets for political, economic and other reform, speeding up the Bush administration's reckoning on what to do next, a U.S. official said Monday. One likely result of the report will be a vastly accelerated debate among President Bush's top aides on withdrawing troops and scaling back the U.S. presence in Iraq.

The "pivot point" for addressing the matter will no longer be Sept. 15, as initially envisioned, when a full report on Bush's so-called "surge" plan is due, but instead will come this week when the interim mid-July assessment is released, the official said.

<More at: <http://apnews.excite.com/article/20070710/D8Q9EA400.html>>

UNDER PRESSURE, WHITE HOUSE PREDICTS 'NEW WAY' IN IRAQ

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- As President Bush faces GOP pressure to change his war strategy, the White House announced Tuesday that an upcoming progress report will result in "the beginning of a new way" in Iraq. ... The report will show "some of the benchmarks have been made, some of them haven't" and will set off a debate that will result in "the beginning of a new way,"

White House spokesman Tony Snow told CNN's "American Morning" on Tuesday. <More at:

http://topics.cnn.com/classify/service/topic?view=limited_json&tagKey=U_S_Republican_Party&targetType=document&cnn%20only&targetSite=everyone&csilD=US_Republican_Party>

THE RESULTS EITHER DON'T CHANGE OR GET WORSE

DESPITE U.S. MILITARY SURGE, CAR BOMBINGS STAY AT SAME LEVELS

Mike Drummond and Mohammed al Dulaimy - McClatchy Newspapers - July 09, 2007

BAGHDAD — Despite the high priority set by U.S.-led coalition forces to stem car bombings, the tactic remains one of the main killers of civilians in Iraq, according to figures compiled by McClatchy Newspapers.

<More at: <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/homepage/story/17731.html>>

REPORT: WARS COST US \$12 BILLION A MONTH

Andrew Taylor - Associated Press Writer - July 9, 2007

WASHINGTON (AP) - The boost in troop levels in Iraq has increased the cost of war there and in Afghanistan to \$12 billion a month, and the total for Iraq alone is nearing a half-trillion dollars, congressional analysts say. All told, Congress has appropriated \$610 billion in war-related money since the Sept. 11, 2001, terror assaults, roughly the same as the war in Vietnam. Iraq alone has cost \$450 billion. The figures come from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, which provides research and analysis to lawmakers. For the 2007 budget year, CRS says, the \$166 billion appropriated to the Pentagon represents a 40 percent increase over 2006. The Vietnam War, after accounting for inflation, cost taxpayers \$650 billion, according to separate CRS estimates. <More at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/sns-ap-us-iraq-costs.1.6862187.story?coll=chi-newsnationworld-hed>>

THINK THIS MIGHT MAKE IT A LITTLE WORSE YET?

U.S. NAVY SENDS THIRD CARRIER TO FIFTH FLEET REGION

Mohammed Abbas - Jul 10, 2007

MANAMA (Reuters) - The U.S. Navy said on Tuesday it had sent a third aircraft carrier to its Fifth Fleet area of operations, which includes waters close to Iran, whose row with the West over its nuclear plans has stoked regional tensions. The carrier will join two aircraft carriers already in the area, which recently gave the U.S. Navy its biggest presence in the Gulf since the Iraq war in 2003, a Navy spokeswoman said.

"(The carrier) Enterprise provides navy power to counter the assertive, disruptive and coercive behaviour of some countries, as well as support our soldiers and marines in Iraq and Afghanistan," a U.S. Navy statement said.

<More at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,-6768207,00.html>>

THE PERSONNEL SITUATION IS JUST GREAT TOO!

RIFTS AMONG ARMY OFFICERS

Greg Jaffe - June 29, 2007 - Wall Street Journal, Page A1

Colonel's Essay Draws Rebuttal From General; Captains Losing Faith

Last December, Lt. Col. Paul Yingling attended a Purple Heart ceremony for soldiers injured in Iraq. As he watched the wounded troops collect their medals, the 41-year-old officer reflected on his two combat tours in Iraq. He was frustrated at how slowly the Army had adjusted to the demands of guerrilla war, and ashamed he hadn't done more to push for change. By the end of the ceremony, he says, he could barely look the wounded troops in the eyes. Col. Yingling just had been chosen to lead a 540-soldier battalion. "I can't command like this," he recalls thinking.

He poured his thoughts into a blistering critique of the Army brass, "A Failure in Generalship," published last month in Armed Forces Journal, a nongovernment publication. "America's generals have been checked by a form of war that they did not prepare for and do not understand," his piece argued. ([Read the article.](#)) The essay rocketed around the Army via email. The director of the Army's elite school for war planners scrapped his lesson plan for a day to discuss it. The commanding general at Fort Hood assembled about 200 captains in the chapel of that Texas base and delivered a speech intended to rebut it.

"I think [Col. Yingling] was speaking some truths that most of us talk about over beers," says Col. Matthew Moten, a history professor at West Point who also served in Iraq. "Very few of us have the courage or foolhardiness to put them in print."

<More at: http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB118306191403551931-1MvQjAxMDE3ODIzOTAyNjkxWj.html>

ARMY MISSES RECRUITING GOAL AGAIN, RAISES WORRY

Kristin Roberts - Jul 9, 2007

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Army, strained by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, missed its recruiting goal for the second straight month in June, indicating a trend that some defense officials on Monday called worrying. The Army will announce the monthly data on Tuesday. Army spokesmen would not discuss the specific figures. But some defense officials said the Army significantly missed its June goal of 8,400 recruits. One official placed the shortfall at about 15 percent, a major gap for a typically strong month when recruiters normally find more willing young people fresh from high school graduation.

<More at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSN0930270020070709>>

LITTLE EFFORT MADE TO FIND DESERTERS

Associated Press - June 29, 2007

FORT BRAGG, N.C. - There is no crack team of bounty hunters, no elite military unit whose job is to track them down and bring them in. Despite a rise in desertions from the Army as the Iraq war drags on into a fifth year, the U.S. military does almost nothing to find those who flee and rarely prosecutes those it gets its hands on. An Associated Press examination of Pentagon figures shows that 174 troops were court-martialed by the Army last year for desertion - a figure that amounts to just 5 percent of the 3,301 Soldiers who deserted in fiscal year 2006. The figures are about 1 percent or less for the Navy and the Marines, according to data obtained by the AP under the Freedom of Information Act. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,140720,00.html>>

THEN THERE ARE ALWAYS THE PATRIOTS, AREN'T THERE?

BROTHERS CHARGED WITH SELLING MILITARY PHONY PARTS

Associated Press - The Florida Times-Union

JACKSONVILLE, FL (AP) -- Two brothers charged with creating fraudulent companies and supplying the U.S. military with thousands of phony electronic parts have agreed to plead guilty, their attorney said Friday. Edward Lee Simmons and Joshua David Simmons, of Hawthorne, were charged with one count each of conspiracy to defraud the government by creating eight fake companies to bid online with the Defense Supply Center in Columbus, Ohio.

<More at: <http://www.firstcoastnews.com/news/local/news-article.aspx?ref=rss&storyid=86071>>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
7/11	1100 - 1400	Grand Hyatt San Francisco Hotel 345 Stockton ST., San Francisco, CA	Career Fair		415-398-1234
7/13		San Diego, CA	Stand Down	<i>Darcy Pavich</i>	619-393-2040
7/26-29		Long Branch, NJ	Wall That Heals	City of Long Branch	
7/27		Ventura, CA	Stand Down	Claire Hope	805-987-3118
7/28		Miami, FL	Resource Fair	William Hunt	305-228-2300
8/2-5		White Oak McKeesport, Pennsylvania	Wall That Heals	White Oak American Legion Post 701	
8/3-5		Roosevelt University Chicago, IL	VVAW 40yr Anniversary	Hannah Frisch VVAW National Staff	773-276-4189
8/3-4		Jacksonville, FL	Resource Fair	Travis Sims	904-630-3680
8/6	1100 - 1400	Doubletree Hotel Crystal City - National Airport 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA	Career Fair		703-416-4100
8/9-12		Elm Avenue Park Glenmont, New York	Wall That Heals	Sheehey Palmer Veterans Memorial Association	
8/10-11		Boston. MA	Resource Fair	Ralph Cooper	617-541-8846
8/11		Hamilton, MT	Resource Fair	Sam Pollard	406-375-7501
8/23-26		215 Marshall Stuart Drive Dickson, Tennessee	Wall That Heals	Sensing Brother's Post 4641	
8/24-26		Marysville, CA	Stand Down	Lance Ayers	530-743-2713
8/25		Fairbanks, AK	Resource Fair	Nancy Smoyer	907-456-4238
8/25-27		Compton, CA	Stand Down	Ivan Mason	310-864-7008
8/28	1100 - 1500	Radisson Martinique On Broadway Hotel 49 west 32ND STREET, NY, NY	Career Fair		212-736-3800
8/30	1100 - 1400	Radisson Hotel Valley Forge 1160 FIRST AVENUE KING OF PRUSSIA, PA	Career Fair		610-337-2000

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

1,800,000 U.S. VETERANS HAVE NO HEALTH CARE

Victor Martinez – July 5, 2007

As the nation struggles to improve medical and mental health care for military personnel returning from Afghanistan and Iraq, about 1.8 million U.S. veterans under age 65 lack even basic health insurance or access to care at Veterans Affairs hospitals, a new study has found.

The ranks of uninsured veterans have increased by 290,000 since 2000, said Stephanie J. Woolhandler, the Harvard Medical School professor who presented her findings yesterday before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

About 12.7 percent of non-elderly veterans -- or one in eight -- lacked health coverage in 2004, the most recent year for which figures are available, she said, up from 9.9 percent in 2000. Veterans 65 and older are eligible for Medicare. About 45 million Americans, or 15 percent of the population, were uninsured in 2005, the Census Bureau reports.

"The data is showing that many veterans have no coverage and they're sick and need care and can't get it," Woolhandler said. <More at: http://www.opednews.com/articles/life_a_victor_m_070622_1_2c800_2c000_u_s_veter.htm>

AT CAMP, MILITARY KIDS BEAR SCARS OF THEIR OWN

Andrea Stone - USA Today - Jun 22, 2007

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif. — Twilight fell over the mountain camp as the group formed a circle to trade war stories: the nightmares of battle that wake them in their sleep. The fighting. The pain. The surgeries. And always, the sudden mood swings.

"Sometimes, we feel like we have to run away," Alex Cox says.

"The military's stupid!" Adam Briggs declares.

Alex, 13, and Adam, 12, have never been to war, but they are no strangers to the ravages it can inflict. Their fathers were injured in Iraq. Like 13 other boys and girls ages 7 to 14 at an unusual summer camp this week for children of injured troops, they are in a generation indelibly marked by war.

Nearly 19,000 U.S. children have had a parent injured in the military since Sept. 11, 2001, the Pentagon says. They are lucky compared with the 2,200 kids whose parents have been killed in Afghanistan or Iraq. <More at: http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-06-20-camp-cover_N.htm>

BUDGETEERS QUESTION PAY RAISE BOOST

MOAA – 6 July 2007

The House and Senate Armed Services Committees have both endorsed a small improvement over the Pentagon proposed 3% military pay raise for 2008. Both agreed with MOAA and The Military Coalition that Congress hasn't yet eliminated the pay gap caused by decades of capping military raises below private sector pay growth, and bumped the 2008 raise to 3.5%. The House of Representatives went a step further, approving a plan to reduce the current 3.9% shortfall by one-half percentage point a year for the next five years.

Now, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has issued a report questioning whether there's any shortfall to fix. They say their pay comparisons put the average enlisted member in the top 25-30% of equivalent civilian workers' earnings. CBO also cites various studies that claim average enlisted pay actually amounts to \$90,000 to \$138,000 a year, once the cost of all military and veterans' benefits is added in. <More at: <http://www.moaa.org/Legislative>>

MEDICARE PROPOSES NEARLY 10% CUT IN PAYMENTS TO DOCTORS

Todd Pack - 07/02/07

Medicare, the federal government's health program for the elderly and disabled, today proposed cutting payments to doctors by 9.9 percent in the 2008 budget year. Congress has rejected similar cuts in the past.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said in a statement it would continue working with Congress and physician groups to "help improve the quality and efficiency of care in a way that is cognizant of the costs to taxpayers and to Medicare and its beneficiaries." <http://tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070702/BUSINESS01/70702015>

MILITARY STIFLES WEB-BASED HEALTH RECORDS SYSTEM

Bob Brewin - June 27, 2007

Two Defense Department medical agencies have attempted to stall the deployment of a popular Internet-based health records system in favor of pursuing their own systems costing hundreds of times as much, according to congressional sources and documents furnished to Government Executive.

Defense's Military Health System and the Army Medical Department have tried to keep Army clinicians in Iraq and health officials at the Veterans Affairs Department in the United States from using the Joint Patient Tracking Application system and the Web-based Veterans Tracking Application system. The two systems provide doctors and other clinicians with real-time access to a soldiers' electronic health records, from the moment a clinician at a combat hospital enters health information on a wounded soldier until the soldier is released from care in the United States. <More at: <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0607/062707bb1.htm>>

STATE TUITION AID FOR GUARDSMEN SUGGESTED

Schwarzenegger wants the budget to include funds to help with college expenses. But a key legislator seeks an income threshold.

Nancy Vogel - Times Staff Writer - July 6, 2007

SACRAMENTO — Calling it "unconscionable" that California offers no college tuition help to its National Guard members, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will push to include funding in the next state budget.

In the prepared text of a speech he is set to deliver today at the groundbreaking for a veterans home on the VA's West Los Angeles campus, the governor says California must be prepared to assist the 27,000 active-duty soldiers and National Guard members returning from overseas. He includes a call to help them pay for college. ... according to National Guard research, until last week California was the only state in the nation that didn't offer its own educational benefits to Guard members. <More at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/politics/cal/la-me-guard6jul06.1.6373424.story>>

ARMY RUSHES ORDERS FOR MINE RESISTANT VEHICLES TO REPLACE HUMVEES

Jim Wolf - Reuters - July 3, 2007

Move called top equipment need

WASHINGTON -- The US Army is placing rush orders for up to seven times more specially designed armored vehicles to help protect troops in Iraq in a move that could cost more than \$20 billion.

"The Army has been approved for the purchase of up to 17,770 MRAP vehicles," Lieutenant Colonel Carl Ey, an Army spokesman, said yesterday, using shorthand for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected replacements for the more than 20-year-old Humvee.

... The Pentagon's high-level Joint Requirements Oversight Council approved the request late last week. <More at: http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2007/07/03/army_rushes_orders_for_mine_resistant_vehicles_to_replace_humvees/>

SOLDIER TO SUE MILITARY AFTER 5TH ARMY DEPLOYMENT

WKMG - Jul 9, 2007

A Florida soldier who enlisted after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks plans to sue the military, fighting his fifth order to combat, according to a Local 6 report.

Twenty-six-year-old Erik Botta, who is a Port St. Lucie reservist, signed up for the service days after the Sept. 11 attacks. He did a tour in Afghanistan and three in Iraq, but he said enough is enough. <More at: <http://www.local6.com/news/13642869/detail.html>>

IDENTITY THIEVES PREY ON CONCERNS OF MILITARY FAMILIES

Associated Press - July 8, 2007

West Palm Beach -- Con artists posing as Red Cross workers are preying on military families, telling them their loved ones have been killed in an attempt to steal the identities of troops in combat.

... A caller posing as a Red Cross worker told Rieth last month that her son, 33-year-old Petty Officer Richard Rieth, had been killed in Afghanistan. The man wanted his date of birth and Social Security number to match to his dog tags and send his body home. <More at: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/palmbeach/sfi-0708apmilitaryids.0.5273171.story>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF JULY 5, 2007

This week, the Army, Navy and Air Force announced an increase, while the Marine Corps had a decrease. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 367 more reservists mobilized than last week. At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 76,757; Navy Reserve, 5,093; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,942; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,933; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 358. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 94,083, including both units and individual augmentees.

A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2007/d20070705ngr.pdf>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SATURDAY 9 JUNE 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,606
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	26,558
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/19]	≥27,022
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	116
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	4
KILLED UK	159
KILLED OTHER COALITION	128
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 7/10]	687
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 46,529
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 73,497 [LANCET-753,209]
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+ [LANCET - 1,335,776]
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [5/15]	1.2M/2.15M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	412
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/23]	6,213
KILLED COALITION	248
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	744
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	32,034
AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.4M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE [7/10]	\$441,944,395,000

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

WAY TO GO, JIM! LET'S CONCENTRATE ON THE IMPORTANT STUFF! VETS REALLY NEEDED TO BE REMINDED WHY THEY ARE PROUD, DON'T THEY? WHAT ABOUT REMINDING THE NON-VETS ABOUT SACRIFICE?

VA ENCOURAGES VETERANS TO WEAR MILITARY MEDALS ON INDEPENDENCE DAY

June 29, 2007

Nicholson: Veterans Can Show Pride in Their Service

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson is urging all veterans across the country to pin on their military medals this Independence Day, July 4, to show their patriotism and pride in their service.

"We want to inspire the American people to recognize and honor the military service of their fellow citizens, and to engender a greater sense of pride and satisfaction on the part of the veterans for what they did for our country," said Nicholson. "This initiative shines a bright light on millions of our fellow citizens who answered the needs of our nation both in peace and in war."

Nicholson encourages the 24 million living Americans who have served in the armed forces to display their medals on the Fourth of July by pinning them on their civilian clothing over their left breast. Nicholson first urged veterans to wear their military decorations last Veterans Day under a program called "Veterans Pride Initiative."

The Veterans Pride Initiative asks veterans to wear their medals on Independence Day, Memorial Day and Veterans Day, and when attending other patriotic events. Major U.S. veterans organizations have endorsed the initiative. Additional information about the initiative is featured at VA's Web site at <http://www.va.gov/veteranspride/>, where veterans can also learn how to replace lost medals or confirm the decorations to which they are entitled.

<http://www.vawatchdog.org/07/vap07/vap062907-1.htm>

THE FORMER DIRECTOR, NSA (PRE- AND ANTI- WIRETAP) SPEAKS OUT

LTG BILL ODOM'S 9 REASONS FOR STAYING ARE THE 9 REASONS FOR LEAVING

ADMINISTRATION SAYS STAY	WHY WE MUST LEAVE
Withdrawal will cause civil war	There is civil war – get out
The world is against our withdrawing	Leaving gains world support
Withdrawal will embolden the insurgents	Occupation is what emboldens the insurgents
Withdrawal will create a terrorist haven	Iraq is already a terrorist training ground
Withdrawal will invite Iranian influence	Occupation invites Iranian influence
Withdrawal spreads unrest	Occupation spreads unrest
Withdrawal causes more Sunni/Shiite clashes	Occupation causes more Sunni/Shiite clashes
Iraq's police & military are unprepared	Unpreparedness is not the problem – disloyalty is the problem
Withdrawal dishonors the troops – undercuts morale	Withdrawing honors the troops by not continuing their sacrifice

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

ENLISTING CHRIST - NOT ON MY WATCH

Mikey Weinstein - [BuzzFlash](#) - Jul 06, 2007

It is with profound sadness that I approach this Fourth of July. Coming from a long line of veterans and speaking as an Honor Graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy, my decision to challenge our nation's armed forces has been a painful one.

Through my children, three of whom are U.S. Air Force Academy graduates, along with thousands of other military personnel and chaplains, I have learned firsthand of aggressive internal efforts to evangelize our fighting men and women into a narrow branch of Christianity that claims salvation only for the "born-again" few. Having once sworn to defend and protect our constitution, I had no choice but to found the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and mount a full-frontal legal attack against these forces of intolerance waging war on our foundational freedoms.

In the hierarchical subculture of the military, when your immediate superior tells you to fall in line for Christ or face the consequences, responding with "get out of my face, sir or ma'am" is simply not an option. Imagine then how a young soldier might respond to a multiple-star general ordering his staff to create a PowerPoint presentation showing a direct parallel between the Book of Revelation and our movements in Iraq and Afghanistan. Or a four-star general distributing a flyer "urging" attendance at a religious class at a church outside the base, entitled "Jesus Versus Mohammad: an examination of the life of both prophets and why Jesus is superior to all."

Soldiers and chaplains contact me from the frontlines on a daily basis telling of troops who refuse to be evangelized and are then sent to combat zones with higher concentrations of insurrectionists, jihadists, and IEDs. Many battle staff meetings conducted by commanders begin with evangelical prayers. When a captain confronted his full colonel about one such exclusionary prayer, the colonel grabbed his uniform and said, "Captain, you better get this down right now, boy! We're here to spread American democracy and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Rather than exceptions, these seem to be the rule.

Today, 12 percent of Americans are Dominionists. This subset of Christianity is dedicated to enforcing a literalist reading of the Bible, and is our own home-grown band of religious fundamentalists. For decades, they have sought to influence government officials, institutions, and policy, with the stated goal of returning our nation, and the world, to Christ. Over the past 6 years with George W. Bush in office, they have made significant inroads into the upper echelons of the Pentagon and rank-and-file, fueling the crusader-like mentality that lies behind the debacle we face in Iraq and beyond.

On every one of the 737 U.S. military installations in 132 countries across the globe, there is now an "Officers Christian Fellowship" for officers, and a "Christian Military Fellowship" for the enlisted, the goal of both being to "Carry the gospel through the medium of ordinary relationships among the entire military community: all services, all ranks, all Christian traditions, and all searchers. There are other well-funded groups such the Military Ministry, a division of Campus Crusades for Christ, that specifically targets basic training installations to convert vulnerable new recruits, and Cadence Ministries, whose "Strategic Ministry" includes preying on those facing the possibility of "deployment and deadly combat" because "shaken people are usually more ready to hear about God than those who are at ease, making them more responsive to the gospel."

America now has a radicalized version of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that revels in the imminence of End Times, engaging "the machinery of the state," which includes weapons of mass destruction. The goals of Dominionist Christians run counter to everything for which our nation stands. Their vision of a spiritually transformed U.S. military, with Ambassadors for Christ in uniform, "empowered by the Holy Spirit," is not one with the religious freedom our founding fathers intended.

The First Amendment is under attack and if the wall separating church and state crumbles, nothing else will matter. It won't matter how the Dallas Cowboys do or if Intelligent Design is taught in Kansas. Nothing will matter if we lose the U.S. military to this toxic brand of fundamentalism. On this July 4th, instead of fireworks, I'll be hearing Sinclair Lewis' words thundering in my head, "Let me tell you something. I've seen fascism up close and personal. . . . Not if, but when, it comes to America, fascism will be wrapped in the American flag carrying a cross."

Michael L. "Mikey" Weinstein is founder and president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. He was formerly Assistant General Counsel in the Reagan White House and later served as General Counsel for H. Ross Perot and Perot Systems Corporation. For 10 years, he was a Judge Advocate General in the U.S. Air Force.

<http://www.VeteransforCommonSense.org/ArticleID/8007>