

SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 22

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 JULY 2008

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

THE NEW GI BILL – THEY GOT IT RIGHT FOR ONCE

Mark June 26th on the calendar! The Senate passed the new GI Bill. It has taken them 24 years and a few wars to modernize this program.

We have all waited for a long time to see the Congress do anything substantial for today's soldiers. Congratulations, Congress! You finally stood up and did something worthwhile for soldiers and veterans, and you even managed to include some of the families.

Real relief and real reward has been a long time coming. Meanwhile Congress has passed all sorts of resolutions “honoring the troops”, and “praising service”. They have passed countless bills renaming Post Offices and federal office buildings after fallen soldiers.

Honors and memorials are important. They bring a sense of community to the soldiers and their families.

Some of you have criticized me in the past for deriding various memorials. I don't. What I deride is the substitution of memorializing for providing effective benefits. I deride the politicians who believe that speeches and the naming of buildings is an adequate substitute for real work and good legislation for our veterans and their families.

At the Memorial Day speeches our veterans are the sons and daughters of those at Lexington and Concord – patriots and heroes all. In the chambers of Congress on the following Monday they are most often on the short end of budgets and “cost-benefit analyses”.

Soldiers, sailors, airmen all know that the business of war is fought by real people with whatever arms the nation can provide. Success in conflict is based far more on the planning and the judgment of the individual than it is on the power of the weaponry. The instrument of conflict is the human being, and the weapons are mere tools.

Congress and their industrialist contributors think of war as being fought by high-priced weapons systems, only incidentally staffed and operated by soldiers, sailors, and airmen. The instrument of conflict is the weapons system, and the soldiers are the unavoidable tools.

That is one big difference, folks! Some day the systems will be obsolete and set out to rust in the bone yards. The leaders and their contributors look forward to that day, because then they can buy and sell some new systems, spare parts, replacements., training. etc., preferably all on a no-bid contract.

Those inconvenient veterans, however, are another story. Nobody makes money off of them, and the real problem is that they may have to be taken care of for a long, long time.

I do not condemn Congress for what they do that is positive for veterans, so congratulations Congress for getting it right for once. Also

congratulations to the individuals and organizations who lobbied so long and hard for this bill. Finally, hail to Senator Jim Webb, without whose energy this bill probably never would have happened.

But there is so much more to be done.

In a recent essay in Time magazine, Nancy Gibbs wrote, “How we treat returning soldiers once the parades have passed is a measure of a country's character and a government's competence.”

Individual citizens and small groups are doing much, but the country, its Executive and its Legislature, isn't doing very much at all. Were it not for the non-governmental help being given to veterans, there wouldn't be much to say positive about our country's character in this regard, and especially about our government's competence.

Nancy Gibbs went on to say, “They protect us when we hand them a rifle and say, ‘Go fight the enemy.’ We betray them when we hand them a pencil and say, ‘Now go fight the bureaucracy.’”

The GI Bill is great, but it won't help a veteran who is hiding in his bedroom because he is suffering from PTSD.

Help is “available”, or as it is usually stated “veterans have ‘access’ to full health care.” “Access” doesn't mean jack if you can't fight your way through the bureaucratic maze. “Access” doesn't help if you can't travel hundreds of miles to your appointments because it is too expensive, or you are afraid to face the outside world.

“Access” is the bureaucrat's excuse – “Fill out all the forms; prove all your allegations about trauma and service-connectedness; face your fears alone, and face a quarter million bureaucrats without any outside help. Don't tell me you don't have “access!”

Our job as advocates for veterans and their families will be done when any veteran and any dependent anywhere can walk into any doctor's office and be treated, sign a short form, and walk out with the government picking up the tab directly. Our job as advocates for serving soldiers and those yet to serve will be done when they know that they will never be sent into battle un-equipped, un-trained, and for any other reason than the specific defense against a real threat to the people of the United States. When they know that they will not be used as occupiers or protectors of commercial interests, then we rest.

So thanks for the GI Bill guys. Now get moving on the hard stuff!

Here is a final quote from Nancy Gibbs:

“Memorial Day was designed to honor dead soldiers; the other 364 belong to the living.” -- Amen! [Ed.]

SPECIAL APPEAL

As our litigation and legislative actions expand rapidly, the expenses to VUFT are likewise mounting rapidly. We don't charge dues, as others do. We don't beat you over the head every month, as they mostly do, with mailings demanding that you do your patriotic duty and send them bucks.

What we will do is come to you if and when – and only when – the need is truly there. Well gang, the need is truly there.

We are sending witnesses to court hearings, to give testimony before legislatures (California now, and many other states to come). We provide a website and this newsletter – in hard copy form to those veterans among us who do not have the internet – and we cover the cost of printing and mailing those twice each month. We mail out memberships letters and cards each month and now have sent out nearly 1,000. We attend meetings where our testimony or other contribution can make a difference for veterans, whether it is in education, medical care, in favor of or opposed to legislation of interest, or even in the political arena where we defend veterans issues without taking a partisan stand.

We need your help now to meet these expenses. Please pitch in at <http://www.vuft.org/donate.html> where you can donate by PayPal or Credit Card. Any amount will help.

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/

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

VETERANS GROUPS TO APPEAL JUDGE’S DECISION OVER VA’S TREATMENT OF PTSD CASES

Jason Leopold - The Public Record - June 28, 2008

A federal Judge has ruled that he lacks the legal authority to force the Department of Veterans Affairs to immediately treat war veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and could not order the VA to overhaul its internal systems that handle benefits claims and medical services.

Two veterans advocacy groups, Veterans for Common Sense (VCS) and Veterans United for Truth, filed a lawsuit seeking class-action status against the VA last year claiming a systematic breakdown at the agency had led to an epidemic of suicides among war veterans.

The lawsuit claimed that some war veterans were turned away from VA hospitals after they sought care for PTSD and later committed suicide.

Paul Sullivan, the executive director of Washington, D.C.-based Veterans for Common Sense, said his organization and Veterans United for Truth would immediately appeal the ruling.

“This ruling will only cause us to redouble our efforts and our pursuit of justice for our nation’s veterans,” Sullivan said. “We will not rest until our job is finished.”

Gordon Erspramer, the lead attorney representing the veterans advocacy groups, said if the decision is upheld on appeal it “would suggest that veterans have no enforceable rights in America, and the Constitution does not apply to veterans.”

<More at: http://www.pubrecord.org/index.php?view=article&catid=1%3Aanationworld&id=174%3Avet-groups-to-appeal-judges-decision-over-vas-treatment-of-ptsd-cases&option=com_content&Itemid=8>

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

More articles available at:

San Francisco Chronicle: www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2008/06/25/state/n100529D47.DTL
<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/06/26/BAB111EUFF.DTL>

Reuters: www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSN2527490520080626

Boston Globe: http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2008/06/30/a_blind_eye_on_soldiers_suicides

Injury Board.com: www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSN2527490520080626

Independent News, New Zealand: www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL0806/S00400.htm

Baltimore Chronicle: www.baltimorechronicle.com/2008/042208Leopold.shtml

New York Times: www.nytimes.com/2008/06/24/opinion/24herbert.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

LA Times: www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-veterans26-2008jun26.0.6486937.story

Veterans for Common Sense: www.veteransforcommonsense.org/articleid/10553

TV Station KPIX: <http://blip.tv/file/1027172>

Fog City Journal: www.fogcityjournal.com/wordpress/2008/06/28/federal-judge-denies-veterans-fast-track-judicial-remedy/

Philadelphia Daily News: http://www.philly.com/dailynews/local/20080630_Vets_still_lack_timely_health_care.html

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

WE REALLY NEED YOUR HELP

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

All donations are tax deductible to the donor.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS [SOME EDITED FOR LENGTH]

On this July 4th, the celebration of our independence, it is important to reread the 1776 Declaration, and note that many of the listed abuses exist today. We should use July 4th to renew our heritage and declare our independence from greed, corruption and deceit of politicians, corporations and financial institutions. These groups have conspired to institute laws and practices that are contrary to our unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

Arnold Stieber

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

SENATE COMMITTEE APPROVES OMNIBUS VETERANS HEALTH AND BENEFITS LEGISLATION

June 26, 2008

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs approved comprehensive legislation to improve health care and benefits for returning servicemembers and veterans from previous eras.

"The bills the Committee has approved today would make significant and far-ranging improvements to the care and benefits veterans have earned through their service," said Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The omnibus health care bill, S. 2969, the Veterans Health Care Authorization Act of 2008, includes the following:

- Enhancements of incentives for VA medical professionals, such as pay, benefits, scholarship programs, and work schedules, in order to help VA recruit and retain top quality clinicians;
- Expansions of numerous authorities, including for the provision of both institutional and non-institutional long-term care as well as rehabilitative care for OIF/OEF veterans; and
- Pilot programs to assist family caregivers, provide outreach and assistance to returning servicemembers in their communities, and help prevent homelessness among veterans.

The omnibus benefits bill, S. 3023, the Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act of 2008, includes the following:

- Improved requirements for notices to veterans about their claims for benefits;
- Enhancement of home loan refinancing options and a temporary increase in the maximum loan guaranty amount for veterans; and
- Expansion of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

In addition to the omnibus veterans' benefits and health care bills, the Committee also approved legislation to provide a cost-of-living increase for disability compensation for veterans and dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors, as well as a bill to make technical corrections to veterans' educational benefits.

PRESIDENT BUSH SIGNS GI BILL

Ben Feller - ABC News - June 30, 2008

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Bush on Monday signed legislation to pay for the war operations in Iraq and Afghanistan for the rest of his presidency and beyond, hailing the \$162 billion plan as a rare product of bipartisan cooperation.

"This bill shows the American people that even in an election year, Republicans and Democrats can come together to support our troops and their families," Bush said in an Oval Office ceremony.

Bush made clear to thank members of both parties in Congress, singling out some sponsors of the long-delayed, compromise measure for praise. His positive comments contrasted with the confrontational tone that has dominated the debate between Congress and his administration over Iraq. <More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Story?id=5276123&page=1>>

SOME STATES DO EVEN MORE

NY DOUBLES VETERAN TUITION ASSISTANCE

Associated Press - July 1, 2008

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) - New York is more than doubling the amount of tuition assistance for combat veterans. The state Higher Education Services Corp. says veterans now may qualify for as much as \$4,287.50 year in state grants and scholarships for study at both private and public schools in New York. That's up from \$2,000 last year.

The agency - which administers state financial aid programs - says the new amount is roughly 98% of the cost of undergraduate tuition charged at colleges in New York's public university system. The tuition assistance is available to veterans who served in combat and were honorably discharged from the military.

NY Higher Education Services Corp.: www.hesc.com; NY Division of Veterans' Affairs: www.veterans.state.ny.us
www.wcax.com/Global/story.asp?S=8586857&nav=menu183_2

OHIO COLLEGE PLAN TO BENEFIT VETERANS

Encarnacion Pyle THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH July 8, 2008

Gov. Ted Strickland signed an executive order this morning that will allow all military veterans [*not just Ohioans*], their spouses and children to go to an Ohio college at in-state tuition rates. The "Ohio GI Promise" comes on the heels of the expanded GI Bill passed by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush.

<More at: www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2008/07/08/vets.html

SUBCOMMITTEE LOOKS AT REINTEGRATION OF NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES

Washington, D.C. - 7/1/08

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing yesterday to determine how well the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) work together to assist in the reintegration of the National Guard and Reserves.

Subcommittee Ranking Member Ginny Brown-Waite (R-Fla.), in the absence of a DOD witness, questioned National Guard and Reserve witnesses about the lack of guidance and funding from DOD. Brown-Waite inquired if lack of support affected individual units' efforts to assist service members during reintegration, including screening for Post Traumatic Distress Disorder (PTSD). She

also asked the Reserve components and the VA why the Marine Corps is the only service that requires departing service members to attend Transition Assistance Program training. <More at: <http://republicans.veterans.house.gov/news/PRArticle.aspx?NewsID=1631>>

For complete access to bills concerning veterans, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/110search.html> and type in the word "veteran"

RETREAT – NEWS

30, 000 TROOPS HEADING TO IRAQ IN 2009

The Associated Press - June 28, 2008

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Pentagon is preparing to order roughly 30,000 troops to Iraq early next year in a move that would allow the U.S. to maintain 15 combat brigades in the country through 2009, The Associated Press has learned.

<More at: www.nytimes.com/aponline/washington/AP-US-Iraq-Troops.html>

IRAQ INSISTS ON U.S. WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE: OFFICIAL

Ahmed Rasheed and Mohammed Abbas - Reuters - 08/07/08

BAGHDAD - Iraq will not accept any security agreement with the United States unless it includes dates for the withdrawal of foreign forces, the government's national security adviser said on Tuesday. The comments by Mowaffaq al-Rubaie underscore the U.S.-backed government's hardening stance toward a deal with Washington that will provide a legal basis for U.S. troops to operate when a U.N. mandate expires at the end of the year.

On Monday, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki appeared to catch Washington off-guard by suggesting for the first time that a timetable be set for the departure of U.S. forces under the deal being negotiated, which he called a memorandum of understanding. Rubaie said Iraq was waiting "impatiently for the day when the last foreign soldier leaves Iraq."

<More at: www.informationclearinghouse.info/article20248.htm>

OCCUPATION PLAN FOR IRAQ FAULTED IN ARMY HISTORY

Michael R. Gordon - NY Times - June 29, 2008

WASHINGTON — Soon after American forces toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003, Gen. Tommy R. Franks surprised senior Army officers by revamping the Baghdad-based military command.

The decision reflected the assumption by General Franks, the top American commander for the Iraq invasion, that the major fighting was over. But according to an Army history that is to be made public on Monday, the move put the military effort in the hands of a short-staffed headquarters led by a newly promoted three-star general, and was made over the objections of the Army's vice chief of staff. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2008/06/29/washington/29army.html>

PENTAGON EXTENDS TOUR OF MARINES IN AFGHANISTAN

Lolita C. Baldor - Jul 3

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Pentagon has extended the tour of 2,200 Marines in Afghanistan, after insisting for months the unit would come home on time. The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, which is doing combat operations in the volatile south, will stay an extra 30 days and come home in early November rather than October, Marine Col. David Lapan confirmed Thursday. Military leaders as recently as Wednesday stressed the need for additional troops in Afghanistan.

<More at: <http://apnews.excite.com/article/20080703/D91MHPV00.html>>

ARMY VETERAN TIRED BUT 'RESOLUTE'

Associated Press J- uly 1, 2008

KILLEEN — A three-decade Army veteran called a "steel spine" by the defense secretary says he and most other soldiers would prefer never to deploy and fight again because they are tired, undermanned and under-equipped.

"We, the Army, have been rode hard and put up wet," said Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Ciotola, Fort Hood's senior noncommissioned officer. "We're catching ourselves coming and going. ... In all honesty, ladies and gentlemen, I and the majority of us in uniform, and those that repeatedly support us are tired."

... "Yet I willingly embrace the reality we still have confronting us; this is a long war, an era of persistent conflict and much is expected of us, both in and out of uniform," Ciotola said <More at: www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/5867002.html>

FEMALE U.S. CASUALTIES MORE COMMON IN IRAQ WAR

Kevin Mooney - CNSNews.com Staff Writer - July 02, 2008

More American servicewomen have been killed serving in Iraq than were killed serving in either Operation Desert Storm or in the Vietnam War, according to a Cybercast News Service database. So far, 97 American women, including seven single mothers, have died in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The average age of these female casualties is 27.

<More at: www.cnsnews.com/ViewNation.asp?Page=Nation/archive/200807/NAT20080702a.html

SWIFT BOAT VETERANS LAMENT A TAINTED MEANING

July 01, 2008 - International Herald Tribune

Years ago, when William Miller talked about being in the Vietnam War - if he talked about being in the Vietnam War - he would tell people he served on a Swift boat. At least now they have heard of it. But not in the way he would like.

"I was proud of what I did, and all the guys I was with," Miller said. "Now somebody says 'Swift boat,' and it's a whole different meaning. They don't associate it with the guys we lost. That's a shame."

"Swift boat" has become the synonym for the nastiest of campaign smears, a shadow that hangs over the presidential race as pundits wait to proclaim that the Swiftboating has begun and candidates declare that they will not be Swiftboated.

Swift boat veterans - especially those who had nothing to do with the group that attacked Senator John Kerry's military record in the 2004 election - want their good name back, and the good names of the men not lucky enough to come home alive.

<More at: www.ihf.com/articles/2008/06/30/america/swift.php>

U.S. JOURNALIST PHOTOGRAPHS GRISLY AFTERMATH OF ATTACK IN IRAQ, GETS BOOTED BY MILITARY

Dahr Jamail - IPS News - July 5, 2008

U.S. journalist Zorah Miller says he was censored by the U.S. military in the Iraqi city of Fallujah after photographing Marines who died in a suicide bombing. On Jun. 26, a suicide bomber attacked a city council meeting in Fallujah, 69 kms west of Baghdad, between local tribal sheikhs and military officials. Three Marines, Cpl. Marcus Preudhomme, Capt. Philip Dykeman, and Lt. Col. Max Galeai, assigned to 2d Battalion, 3rd Marine Division based in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, died in the attack.

... Miller explained to IPS that he meticulously showed his photos to the Marines he was with to make sure he was not going to show any photos that would upset the family members of the deceased Marines. "They were all okay with them, so then about 96 hours after the bombing I published the photos on my blog." - Then things got interesting. <More at: : www.alternet.org/story/90480/>

STUDY RELEASED ON MILITARY GAYS

AP/Anne Flaherty - Jul. 08, 2008

(WASHINGTON) — Congress should repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" law because the presence of gays in the military is unlikely to undermine the ability to fight and win, according to a new study released by a California-based research center.

The study was conducted by four retired military officers, including the three-star Air Force lieutenant general who in early 1993 was tasked with implementing President Clinton's policy that the military stop questioning recruits on their sexual orientation.

"Evidence shows that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly is unlikely to pose any significant risk to morale, good order, discipline or cohesion," the officers states.

To support its contention, the panel points to the British and Israeli militaries, where it says gay people serve openly without hurting the effectiveness of combat operations. <More at: www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1820869,00.html>

PENTAGON FIGHTS EPA ON POLLUTION CLEANUP

Lyndsey Layton - Washington Post Staff Writer - June 30, 2008

The Defense Department, the nation's biggest polluter, is resisting orders from the Environmental Protection Agency to clean up Fort Meade and two other military bases where the EPA says dumped chemicals pose "imminent and substantial" dangers to public health and the environment.

The Pentagon has also declined to sign agreements required by law that cover 12 other military sites on the Superfund list of the most polluted places in the country. The contracts would spell out a remediation plan, set schedules, and allow the EPA to oversee the work and assess penalties if milestones are missed.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/29/AR2008062901977.html>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
7/10	1100 - 1400	Holiday Inn Virginia Beach Exec Center 5655 Greenwich Road, Virginia Beach, VA	Norfolk Military Career Fair		757-499-4400
7/10	1000 - 1600	Scottish Rite Event Center 1895 Camino del Rio South, San Diego, CA	Western Regional Career Event		Register
7/11		San Diego, CA	Stand Down	Darcy L. Pavich	619-497-0142
7/12-13		Street Fair Camarillo, CA	Veterans' Needs Display CA Central Coast VVAW	stevecrandall@verizon.net	
7/17		Palace Station Hotel 2411 W. Sahara Ave, Las Vegas, NV	Las Vegas Military Career Fair		702-367-2411
7/17-20		Fox Park Wildwood, New Jersey	Wall That Heals	VVA Chapter 955	
7/18		Detroit, MI	Stand Down	Tyrone Chatman	313-831-5500
7/21	1100-1400	Radisson Hotel Boston 200 Stuart St, Boston, MA	Boston Military Career Fair		617-482-1800
7/23	1100-1400	Pensacola Civic Center 201 E. Gregory St, Pensacola, FL	Pensacola Military Career Fair		850- 432-0800
7/24		DoubleTree Hotel Crystal City 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA	Mid-Atlantic Regional Career Event		703.416.4100
7/28		Port Townsend, WA	Resource Fair	John Braasch	
7/28		Holiday Inn Conference Center 130 Clairemont Ave, Atlanta, GA	Atlanta Military Career Fair		404-371-0204
9/15-16		DVA Main HQ 810 Vermont Ave NW, Washington, DC	VA Hearing - Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Illness	DSNurse@aol.com	
9/19	0800 - 1300	Cafeteria, American River College 4700 College Oak Drive, Sacramento, CA.	2nd Annual Road Home... From Combat to College	RSVP Cheryl Burkhart	

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

DOD ESTABLISHES NEW PHYSICAL DISABILITY BOARD

IMMEDIATE RELEASE - No. 549-08 - June 30, 2008

The Defense Department announced today the establishment of a new Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) to review disability ratings of wounded warriors and provide another avenue of administrative recourse for our wounded veterans. The Air Force has been designated as lead DoD component for operation and management of the PDBR.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12029>

ECSTASY IS THE KEY TO TREATING PTSD

Amy Turner - The Times of London UK - June 27, 2008

At last the incurably traumatized may be seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. And controversially, the key to taming their demons is the 'killer' drug Ecstasy

An Ecstasy tablet. That's what it took to make Donna Kilgore feel alive again that and the doctor who prescribed it. As the pill began to take effect, she giggled for the first time in ages. She felt warm and fuzzy, as if she was floating. The anxiety melted away. Gradually, it all became clear: the guilt, the anger, the shame.

Before, she'd been frozen, unable to feel anything but fear for 10 years. Touching her own arms was, she says, "like touching a corpse." She was terrified, unable to respond to her loving husband or rock her baby to sleep. She couldn't drive over bridges for fear of dying, was by turns uncontrollably angry and paralyzed with numbness. When she spoke, she heard her voice as if it were miles away; her head felt detached from her body. "It was like living in a movie but watching myself through the camera lens," she says. "I wasn't real."

Unknowingly, Donna, now 39, had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). And she would become the first subject in a pioneering American research program to test the effects of MDMA otherwise known as the dance floor drug Ecstasy on PTSD sufferers.

Some doctors believe MDMA could be the key to solving previously untreatable deep-rooted traumas. For a hard core of PTSD cases, no amount of antidepressants or psychotherapy can rid them of the horror of systematic abuse or a bad near-death experience, and the slightest reminder triggers vivid flashbacks. <More at: <http://www.alternet.org/story/89625/>>

LOW APPROVAL RATE FOR VETS' CHEMICAL TESTS CLAIMS

Erica Werner - Associated Press Writer - June 19, 2008

WASHINGTON -- The Veterans Affairs Department has granted only 6 percent of health claims filed by veterans of secret Cold War chemical and germ warfare tests conducted by the Pentagon, according to figures obtained Thursday by The Associated Press.

Veterans advocates called the number appallingly low.

By comparison, about 88 percent of processed claims from Gulf War vets were granted as of last year, according to VA documents. More than 90 percent of processed claims from Iraq and Afghanistan vets were granted as of earlier this year.

In a statement the VA said it was "incorrect" to make such comparisons because of the unique circumstances of different groups of veterans.

The VA noted that most of the veterans of the chemical and germ tests ended their service more than three decades ago and a study by the advisory Institute of Medicine - dismissed by veterans as shoddily done - found no clear connection between the tests and the cancer, respiratory illnesses and other problems the veterans are now having.

During the tests thousands of service members were exposed, often without their knowledge, to real and simulated chemical and biological agents, including sarin and VX. <More at: http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/1152ap_chemical_tests.html >

NEW LAW EASES CITIZENSHIP PATH FOR TROOPS

Associated Press - June 27, 2008

RANDALLSTOWN, Md. - U.S. Army Spc. Kendell Frederick lost his life while trying to become a citizen of the country he was fighting for. Now, his mother hopes a bill President Bush signed into law Thursday will make sure no other soldier dies the way her son did.

Frederick, a native of Trinidad who moved to the U.S. in 1999, was killed in Iraq in October 2005 when his vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb. He was only in the convoy because he had to go to another base to get a duplicate set of fingerprints made for his U.S. citizenship application.

After three years of work by his mother and two Maryland Democrats, Bush signed the Kendell Frederick Citizenship Assistance Act, which is meant to ease the citizenship process for members of the military.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/news/article/new-law-eases-citizenship-path-for-troops.html>>

RURAL AMERICA FERTILE FOR MILITARY

Associated Press - July 6, 2008

Rural America continues to be fertile ground for military recruiters as young people continue to see the armed forces as a way to escape poverty or lack of opportunity in their hometowns, according to an analysis by the Department of Defense data by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

The Post-Dispatch reviewed data for every active-duty, Reserve and National Guard recruit, who represent the majority of forces serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. The analysis excluded the 1 percent of U.S. counties with populations under 1,000.

On a per-capita basis, no county in America without a major Army installation has provided more soldiers than Menominee County, Wis., the newspaper found. Almost 90 percent of the county's 4,562 people are members of the Menominee tribe. It's also one of the nation's poorest counties with an unemployment rate more than twice the national average.

<More at: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-mo-military-ruralame.0,1820321.story>>

WYOMING VETS OFTEN MUST TRAVEL FAR FOR CARE

Jared Miller - Star-Tribune capital bureau - July 6, 2008

CHEYENNE -- In a large, rural state like Wyoming, getting to the doctor can sometimes mean traveling long distances. That's especially true for many of the state's veterans.

Former service members often rely on Veterans Affairs medical centers and clinics for care, and those facilities can be many miles away.

With fuel prices sky high, appointments sometimes get put off, which can create health risks, according to Cheyenne VA Medical Center Director Dr. David Kilpatrick.

"People who have to travel a long distance to get care typically aren't as compulsive on their follow-up appointments as they might be, and so you don't necessarily catch things as early as you might in all circumstances," said Kilpatrick, adding that often the issue is the cost of travel, rather than a shortcoming of the patient.

<More at: <http://www.trib.com/articles/2008/07/06/news/wyoming/63c8d2d616919c688725747d002100a7.txt>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF JULY 2, 2008

This week the Navy and Air Force announced an increase, while the Army and Marine Corps announced a decrease. The Coast Guard number remained unchanged. The net collective result is 266 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 87,353; Navy Reserve, 5,697; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 11,609; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,354; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 787. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 113,800, 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/Jul2008/d20080702ngr.pdf>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE WEDNESDAY 9 JULY 2008

NOTE: STATISTICS FOR WOUNDED ARE GETTING SHAKIER - DoD REVISES NUMBERS – DROPS NON-HOSTILE "OTHER"

WOUNDED DID NOT CHANGE – DoD NOW REPORTING 200 FEWER THAN TWO WEEKS AGO!!!

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (1,878 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,115
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 5/31]	30,182
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 4/5]	≥38,631
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 3/1]	145
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	3
KILLED UK	176
KILLED OTHER COALITION	138
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30/07]	1,001
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 93,366
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400K – 1.2M
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,407 DAYS)

KILLED US	543
OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 10/2007]	1,994
KILLED COALITION	334
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,472
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$535,225,944,458

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

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

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

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

FORTIFIED MILITARY FOODS: PROBIOTICS AIM TO PROMOTE A HEALTHY GUT

Institute of Food Technology

With today's scientific advancements in nutrition, soldiers will soon be plied with candy, cookies and cakes, except these will contain probiotics, the beneficial bacteria already found in the human gut. Because they suffer from high incidences of diarrhea, U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan will soon receive ice cream sandwiches, peanut butter bars and vanilla pudding desserts filled with probiotics, with the hope that good bacteria will help curb intestinal illness.

Back in World War II, the U.S. military gave soldiers Hershey chocolate bars to boost their morale as well as their energy. The Ration D bar was a survival ration that provided subsistence calories and nutrition to soldiers facing extreme conditions.

With today's scientific advancements in nutrition, soldiers will soon be plied with candy, cookies and cakes, except these will contain probiotics, the beneficial bacteria already found in the human gut. <More at: www.ift.org/cms/>

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HOME DEPOT GETS DISABLED VET'S HOUSE BACK ON TRACK

David Accomazzo - July 8, 2008

For Tracy Keil, wife of disabled Army vet Matt Keil, hanging out at a hardware store isn't exactly her idea of a good time.

But at the Home Depot on Monday in Parker, circumstances were a bit different. "This is probably the most fun I've ever had at Home Depot," she said, wearing a hat with the chain store's logo.

On Friday - the Fourth of July - thieves made off with a variety of tools belonging to volunteers from the nonprofit Homes for Our Troops, which is building a home free of charge for the couple.

Now, thanks to the \$2,000 of tools donated by the Parker Home Depot on Monday, construction will continue, virtually uninterrupted.

The Keils went to Home Depot the day after the burglary to find a part for Matt's wheelchair. Store manager Glenn Richardson recognized them from the news and approached the couple. He immediately offered to replace the stolen tools.

"It's the least we could do," Richardson told the couple.

In September, Homes for Our Troops announced it would team with Pulte Homes to build a house for the Keils.

<More at: www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/jul/08/home-depot-gets-house-for-veteran-back-on/>

A NEW FIGHTER ON THE BLOCK IN THE NEW YORK CITY AREA

Urban Justice Center
Veterans & Servicemembers Project
123 William St. 16th Floor
New York, NY 10038
646-602-5620

The Veterans and Servicemembers Project offers legal services and advocacy to a population often abandoned by the very system of government they defend in battle. Drawn increasingly from the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the country, past and present military personnel contend with poorly regulated recruiting tactics, unsafe working conditions, and an antiquated and overloaded disability benefits process. Often unaware of their rights and wary of challenging authority, they face especially daunting barriers to necessary assistance.

At an individual level, the Veterans and Servicemembers Project provides legal training and representation on matters ranging from veterans disability claims to service discharge applications. The project also pursues systemic reform through litigation and advocacy in such areas as recruiting irregularities, workplace harassment, and inefficiency and abuse in the benefits application process. With the active collaboration of existing service organizations, it aims to provide comprehensive education and support for a population that, in a time of mounting war, promises only increase in size and collective need.

<http://www.urbanjustice.org/ujc/projects/veterans.html>

DISCOVER WHAT THE CANDIDATES SAY ABOUT VETERANS

Senator Barack Obama's official veteran web page:

<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/veterans/>

Senator John McCain's official veteran web page:

<http://www.johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/9cb5d2aa-f237-464e-9cdf-a5ad32771b9f.htm>

ADD-ON ~ VARIOUS STUFF

THE FOLLOWING TABLE HIGHLIGHTS THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MONTGOMERY GI BILL AND THE NEW GI BILL.

	Montgomery GI Bill Chapter 30	Post 9/11 GI Bill Proposed - Chapter 33
Payment Rate for Full-Time Student	Annually set - nationwide - monthly payment rate. Set to increase to \$1321 for 2008-2009. Paid to the student each month.	A payment indexed to full in-state tuition for public schools. A lump sum paid directly to the school each term. The national average for in-state tuition in 2008 is \$6,185.
Duration of Program	36 Month entitlement.	36 Month entitlement.
Additional expense payments	No additional payments for expenses.	Living Expenses - stipend based on local BAH for E-5 with dependents – paid monthly avg. amount app. \$1,000 a month.
		Books and Fees - Up to \$1,000 a year.
Eligibility Requirements	Those who entered service the military after June 30, 1985.	Active-duty service since Sept. 11, 2001.
VEAP-era Eligibility	No - Except those who elected to convert in the past.	Yes – those who meet the eligibility criteria above.
Benefit Expiration	10 Years after separation or discharge.	15 Years after discharge or separation.
Transfer benefits to families	Limited - Currently Limited to Army for Critical MOS only.	Yes
Enrollment fee	Yes - \$1,200	None - Those who have not yet completed paying their \$1,200 for the MGIB may elect to stop further payment.

Affects on Existing GI Bill Benefits

If you are already enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill and also meet the criteria for the Post 9/11 GI Bill, you have the option to transfer your remaining MGIB benefits to the new program.

For many veterans this will be a good option. However, due to the tuition limits set by this new GI Bill, many veterans who are pursuing a post-graduate degree may find the MGIB better suits their needs. This is also true for those students pursuing an online degree, as this new benefit will not pay the housing stipend to students enrolled in distance learning programs.

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.]

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

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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