

SOUND OFF!



VOL. II, NO 23

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

25 JULY 2007

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

WHAT SORT OF NATION ARE WE DEFENDING? A MODERN CIVICS REFRESHER.

"We the people ...", or at least that's what I thought it said.

Sometimes we forget that our Republic derives from the sovereignty of the people. Our "Founders" didn't always really believe in that completely, as their definition of "people" was a bit truncated. Nonetheless, they had an idea that whatever powers government held no longer derived from the beneficence of a king, or even by divine gift, rather they derived from the desires, the hopes, and especially the permission of the people.

The preamble to the Constitution proceeds from the charge in the Declaration of Independence which says,

"Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, ... laying [the Government's] foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

In short, it is we citizens who formed the government and it is we who wrote its rules ~ "we" because there is an historical continuity from the "Founders" to us.. Since popular democracy, where all vote on everything, is an impossible concept in any but small associations, we set up a representative democracy. By doing so we did not aim to reestablish an aristocracy, rather, consistent with our charge in the Declaration, we hired representatives to do our bidding: we also required them to become expert in governance and to use their judgment, but always in the interest of our "Safety and Happiness". Those founding principles have not changed.

After we established the legislature, we hired a chief executive to keep the everyday machine of government running. We did not crown this executive king. We delineated certain powers and responsibilities and we demanded accountability and truth. We were so fearful of concentrating power in one person, we gave the legislature broad powers to check the executive through oversight, and we demanded that they do it regularly and thoroughly.

Finally, because we wanted each branch to balance the powers of the other, and because we could not trust either the legislature or the executive to execute justice fairly, we set up an independent judiciary, and over time have given it the power to check the excesses of the other two branches through Constitutional review and through the imposition of criminal and civil penalties.

We did all of this at the beginning, and in that order, forever establishing the order of supremacy – first the people, then the legislature, then the executive, with the circle being closed by the judiciary which protects the people from the other two branches, and from their own and their leaders' excesses.

We incorporated ourselves in the Declaration, and wrote our bylaws in the Constitution. Examining the Declaration in the light of current events should give us all pause. Some of the charges made in 1776 could apply today – a few selected ones:

"[King George] has ~ refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good ~ ... obstructed the Administration of Justice ~ ... made Judges dependent on his Will alone ~ ... affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power ~ ... depriv[ed] us, in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury ~ ... transport[ed] us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences ~ declar[ed] [himself] invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever."

Given the use of contractors like Blackwater to perform military duties in Iraq and Afghanistan, this charge becomes a favorite:

"He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation."

What has happened to us? What happened to those who would brave the mightiest empire in the world 231 years ago, that we have been cowed into submission in the wake of a single attack by a few criminal madmen? At one time we would have become angry, and would have braved all odds to pursue those felons in the best way possible. Instead we are told to tremble and quake out of fear of the unknown, and tragically, we accept the role. We timidly accept that the "only" way is through military might, and we sit by while our fine military forces are dashed on the rocks of a foreign civil war.

"To act coolly, intelligently and prudently in perilous circumstances is the test of a man – and also a nation."

General of the Armies Douglas MacArthur

Meanwhile, instead of pursuing the perpetrators we, like Marlborough, "march up the hill and march right back again," taking and re-taking small patches of a foreign country. Not all that different from what the 101st went through on Hill 937 (Hamburger Hill), is it?

"When will we ever learn?" - Pete Seeger

Every soldier, from the Commander-in-Chief on down takes the oath of office that says, in part, "I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic". The Commander-in-Chief's oath goes further and says that in addition to defending the Constitution "to the best of my ability", he will also "preserve" and "protect" it. Every Congressperson likewise swears such an oath.

So the question remains, "What are we defending?"

Are we defending the right to cower fearfully under our beds while others fight for us, die for us, and people we generally don't trust make all of our decisions for us? Or, is it the right to shop while the American character and reputation is shredded through the use of torture, the denial of treaties, and the imposition of an unwanted government on another sovereign nation? Or, is it the right to slaughter innocents, American and others, and to hide their deaths from the world? Or, is it the need to perpetuate the obscenity that all of this is somehow in the defense of "freedom and democracy".

Shouldn't we be defending what our forefathers left us? The opportunity to be better off and more secure than our fathers and stronger morally than our predecessors. The chance to lead the world through good works and sound policies. The opportunity to respect others as we wish to be respected. The glory of having a citizens' Republic rather than some lesser form of government where the people are subordinate to a secular or religious privileged few. The primacy of fairness and the rule of law. The need to be constant and equitable in all dealings with each other and the world.

Shouldn't our representatives – our employees – be defending the basic tenets of the Constitution rather than sitting idly by while it is torn to shreds? Shouldn't they do as we demand – providing oversight of the actions of the executive, and curtailing those actions when they exceed Constitutional limits?

Shouldn't our highest paid employee – the President – the Chief Magistrate – the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces – and all his officers be held to the law just as we are held to it? Shouldn't they be required to show the courage it takes to be truthful and fair at all times. Shouldn't he and they be held to their oaths, just like any common soldier?

If we are a peaceful people, shouldn't he be a peaceful executive? If we forswear torture, shouldn't he? If we reach out a hand to the poor and indigent in the world, Americans or others, shouldn't he?

Other Presidents have faced assaults on American principles, and have stood strong.

Dwight D. Eisenhower cautioned us about security and defense in words we should heed today.

"How far can you go without destroying from within what you are trying to defend from without?"

On March 15, 1965, in an address to Congress after the march on Selma, Lyndon Johnson said,

"[R]arely in any time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved Nation."

He could have been talking about today.

And Theodore Roosevelt said,

"Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the president or any other public official, save exactly to the degree in which he himself stands by the country. It is patriotic to support him insofar as he efficiently serves the country. It is unpatriotic not to oppose him to the exact extent that by inefficiency or otherwise he fails in his duty to stand by the country."

He could have been calling us to duty today.

So as a patriotic American I refuse to defend torture. I refuse to defend the use of mercenary armies, beholden to no one except their paymasters. I refuse to turn my back on those who have fought for us, no matter what the folly of the war; they are our fellow citizens and have done what they were called upon to do. I refuse to disdain the rest of the world, and by doing so, succumb to the appalling fantasy of American Exceptionalism. I refuse to believe that militarism is an American principle, and that armed force is the only weapon we have to confront terrorists.

"If all you have is hammer, everything looks like a nail"

[Bernard] Baruch's Law

I will defend both the Declaration and the Constitution. I will defend my nation's right and obligation to take the risks necessary to defend our rights and the rights of all mankind. I will defend a foreign policy that holds war to be the absolute last resort.

And, most especially I will demand that our employees in Congress and the Administration do the same. I will gladly do all of this with, as Thomas Jefferson said in the Declaration,

"...a decent respect to the opinions of mankind."

Jefferson also said,

"In questions of power, then, let no more be said of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution." -- Thomas Jefferson

We should remind our Congresspersons that one does not have to be a hero to be a patriot, but one does have to be a patriot to be a true hero. [Ed.]

LONG, BUT THIS IS THE LAST ISSUE OF THIS VOL. ~ SEE YOU IN A MONTH

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!

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC. IS A NATIONAL, NON-PROFIT, PUBLIC SERVICE CORPORATION, INCORPORATED IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA [#C2766290]. DONATIONS TO VUFT ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE TO THE DONOR PER IRC SECTION 501(C)(3), AND FOR CALIFORNIA RESIDENTS UNDER CA RTC 23701W.

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

VUFT, Inc. has recently joined in a lawsuit against the Veterans' Administration. See our Bulletin #15 at the website.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

My name is Libby Lewis and I'm a reporter for National Public Radio. I'm writing to contact Vietnam veterans who have sought out treatment of PTSD since 2003 - and who would be willing to talk with me.

The VA has seen more Vietnam vets for PTSD since 2003, and it would be good to talk to any of those veterans. It would also be good to talk with Vietnam vets who have sought treatment for diagnosed PTSD since 2003 - from counselors OUTSIDE the VA.

I can be reached at 1 800 344 3884 and by email at elewis@npr.org

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Libby Lewis
National Desk
National Public Radio

AN OP-ED/LETTER WITH A CALIFORNIA SLANT, BUT APPLICABLE EVERYWHERE

TIME TO 'WALK THE WALK' FOR VETS' SERVICES

Carl Young - 7/11/2007

Promises, promises, promises.

Our politicians make them all the time, but seldom follow through with their supposedly sincere pledges. Promises are easy to make as well as to break. There's always some sorry reason why their word had to be broken.

A recent example is Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's plans for a multimillion dollar cut from our Employment Development Department/JS services. Those services are provided by people helping veterans make the transition of returning home by offering programs that will help them get jobs in the civilian world.

Taking \$27 million away does not seem to fit in with Schwarzenegger's proclaimed care for our military veterans. How many times have you heard him promise to do all he can for them? The San Francisco Chronicle recently quoted the governor's spokesperson, Gena Grebitus, as saying, "Schwarzenegger wants to continue to reach out and let active-duty soldiers and veterans know they have access to public colleges and universities in California."

Promises, promises, promises.

We need more programs like Veterans Upward Bound that guide veterans through the process of grants, provide study help and help veterans with "brush-up" courses for free. Despite being a highly successful program, there are only 44 Upward Bound Programs in the country.

The Pentagon insists there is a program currently in place for veterans who want to go to college while in the military. But according to many returning veterans, it's not easy studying while in the service, especially when they are in combat zones.

In a recent Washington Post article, Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Stewart Aument, the Veterans Affairs deputy undersecretary for benefits, said, "There is very much a shared passion in this organization in trying to do right by veterans." More promises. Once again, actions speak louder than words.

Veterans' advocates are constantly pointing out that Iraq and Afghanistan are draining the dollars from health, education and welfare programs. They point out that there are 400,000 disability claims backlogged, and that new claims are being filed at a rate much greater than the federal government is prepared for and can handle.

The next question is what kind of promise has our government given veterans? Do you know? Better yet, what kind of promises were made by our Founding Fathers regarding taking care of the country's veterans?

None. That's right. Try searching Google online for promises made by our government to veterans now and then. That search for promises in print has already been conducted by David F. Burelli, a National Defense Specialist for the Congressional Research Services, in a recent research paper. His work, titled "Military Health Care: The Issue of 'Promised Benefits,'" concluded, after 23 pages, that there's no promise in print anywhere. That shocking news comes as no surprise to many veterans and veteran advocates.

Veterans groups often talk about the "moral obligation" the government owes to veterans.

So we are left with two dangerous assumptions: one, that Congress understands what is "moral," and two, that it has the fortitude to commit to an "obligation." But how is that going to happen when you check federal regulations covering veterans' benefits and you find that, "The Secretary may or may not provide the benefit listed in the specific regulation"?

Our government never made any promise to our veterans. That's the cold, hard fact. It leaves them covered, as you can't go back on something that you didn't promise, right? So it's not breaking any promises. Meanwhile, we let them spout platitudes about how grateful this state, or this country, is to our veterans.

What is needed now is action. A good place to start is phoning Schwarzenegger at 916-445-2841 [or your own Governor if you are not from California] and telling him you're sick of his promises to our veterans, or e-mail him at governor@governor.ca.gov. Tell him it's time to walk the walk and to talk the talk. Unless more Americans insist on action, we will always be dishonoring those men and women who promised, when sworn into the service, to serve their country ... and did it.

(Carl Young is president of Vietnam Veterans of America, Humboldt Memorial chapter.)

See also Larry Scott's article at http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne_larry_sc_070702_what_promise_to_vete.htm

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

On July 12th the House passed HR 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, by a vote 223-201. The legislation, sponsored by Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton, would begin the responsible redeployment of U.S. troops within 120 days and complete redeployment by April 1, 2008. The President would have to report to Congress why troops should remain in Iraq for limited purposes such as to fight terrorism or to train Iraqi forces.

Text of the legislation is at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/C?c110:/temp/~c110wVNqds>

WOUNDED WARRIOR BILL, S 1606, PASSES SENATE 94-0

Patty Murray - Jul 12, 2007

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - By a vote of 94-0, the U.S. Senate today agreed upon landmark legislation to improve care for wounded troops and veterans when they return home from battle. The Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act was attached to the FY2008 Department of Defense Authorization bill, which is expected to pass the Senate in the coming days.

<More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/ArticleID/8047>>

HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE PASSES FIVE BILLS

July 18, 2007

Washington, D.C. – The House Veterans' Affairs Committee favorably reported five bills to the House. The bills would expand veterans' health care and benefits.

1. H.R. 2623 – To prohibit the collection of copayments for all hospice care furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
2. H.R. 2874 – To make certain improvements in the provision of health care to veterans, and for other purposes.
3. H.R. 1315 – To provide specially adaptive housing assistance to certain disabled members of the Armed Forces residing temporarily in housing owned by a family member.

4. H.R. 760 – To deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
5. H.R. 23 – To provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States merchant marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II.

More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/07/hcva07/hcva071807-1.htm>

WHILE MANY U.S. LEGISLATORS DECRY THE FACT THAT THE IRAQI CONGRESS IS TAKING A VACATION IN AUGUST, OUR CONGRESS IS TAKING A “SUMMER DISTRICT WORK PERIOD” STARTING AUG. 6TH, RETURNING AFTER LABOR DAY.

RETREAT – NEWS

A FEW ARTICLES TO CLARIFY THINGS FOR YOU

PACE: LOOK FOR 12-MONTH TOURS BY SPRING 2008

Stars and Stripes - Mark St.Clair - July 21, 2007

JALALABAD, Afghanistan — Rumored 18-month deployments? Not according to Gen. Peter Pace. And, he said while visiting troops in Afghanistan, tour lengths could return to 12 months by the spring.

“An 18-month tour has zero, zero, none, nada, squat, nothing, no ... validity, OK? I want to make sure you got that,” the outgoing chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told a soldier with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team.

... Pace said plans are in the works for deployment lengths to go back to 12 months in the early part of next year, and “that over time — not tomorrow — but over time, units ... will deploy for 12 months and be home for 24 months, and in that 24 months get family time, get full-spectrum training and be ready to go wherever the nation needs them to go.”

More at: < <http://stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=55069&archive=true>>

PACE: US TROOPS IN IRAQ COULD RISE

Robert Burns - AP Military Writer - July 16, 2007

BAGHDAD — The U.S. military is weighing new directions for Iraq, including an even bigger troop buildup if President Bush thinks his "surge" strategy needs a further boost, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said Monday. Marine Gen. Peter Pace revealed that he and the chiefs of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force are developing their own assessment of the situation in Iraq, to be presented to Bush in September. That will be separate from the highly anticipated report to Congress that month by Gen. David Petraeus, the top commander for Iraq. The Joint Chiefs are considering a range of actions, including another troop buildup, Pace said without making any predictions. He called it prudent planning to enable the services to be ready for Bush's decision.

The military must "be prepared for whatever it's going to look like two months from now," Pace said in an interview with two reporters traveling with him to Iraq from Washington. "That way, if we need to plus up or come down" in numbers of troops in Iraq, the details will have been studied, he said. <More at: www.foxnews.com/wires/2007Jul16/0.4670.IraqPace.00.html>

GENERAL SEEKS TROOP CUT IN IRAQ

Associated Press - July 23, 2007

BAGHDAD - In a move that could portend a strategy change, the commander of U.S. forces in northern Iraq said he has proposed reducing his troop levels and shifting next year to missions focused less on direct combat.

Army Maj. Gen. Benjamin Mixon told The Associated Press that if current trends hold, he would like to begin this troop reduction and change in mission in Ninevah province, where he said Iraqi army forces already are operating nearly independently. He has proposed shifting the province to Iraqi government control as early as August.

... Col. John Charlton, commander of the 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, who leads a task force of 6,000 U.S. Soldiers in a section of Anbar province that includes Ramadi, said in an interview Friday that by January he might be ready to take a 25 percent troop cut if the Iraqi police, numbering about 6,000 now, are made stronger by then. "The police are the keys to maintaining security from al-Qaida," Charlton said.

<More at: http://breakingnews.nypost.com/dynamic/stories//IRAQ_SHIFTING_STRATEGY?SITE=NYNYP&SECTION=HOME>

IRAQ OFFICIAL CASTS DOUBT ON TAKEOVER

Associated Press - July 21, 2007

BAGHDAD - Iraq's national security adviser expressed doubt Friday that Iraqi forces will be able to assume security control of the whole country by the end of the year, a goal of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government. In April, al-Maliki said Iraqi soldiers and police would take over security responsibility from U.S. and other international forces in all 18 provinces by the end of 2007, allowing the American-led coalition to shift into a support role and possibly begin sending troops home.

"We had hopes and intentions to take over security in all provinces and command of all army divisions before the end of the year," national security adviser Mouwaffak al-Rubaie told The Associated Press. "But there are difficulties and challenges that appeared along the way, in arming, equipping, recruiting and training our armed forces."

Al-Rubaie would not give a new deadline. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,143182,00.html>

PENTAGON MAY DELAY FULL IRAQ REVIEW

07/20/2007 - 7:40am

A September report on President George W. Bush's strategy in Iraq will show whether the plan is progressing, but a fuller assessment will take until November, a top U.S. commander said on Thursday. Lt. Gen. Ray Odierno, deputy U.S. commander in Iraq, told reporters at the Pentagon that trends in the war-torn country have begun moving "in the right direction" since Bush's troop buildup became complete in mid-June.

"Forty-five days from now, September 1 ... I'll be able to make a bit more accurate assessment if it's something we think is going to continue or something we think is just a blip," he said in a video link from Baghdad. "In order to do a good assessment, I need at least till November to do that," Odierno added. <More at: www.capitolhillblue.com/cont/node/2948>

US FACED WITH IRAQI ARMY TURNCOATS

Sam Dagher - Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor - July 10, 2007

Khalis, Iraq - As the US military continues to move through Diyala Province to uproot Al Qaeda fighters hidden amid its villages, an emerging foe may be helping to erode many of the successes the Americans are having in the three-week-old operation "Arrowhead Ripper." According to Iraqi soldiers and US officers, militants linked to Al Qaeda are using tribal and family connections and, in some cases, also providing financial incentives to members of the Iraqi Army to help them remain strong and evade capture.

... A US Army officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter, goes even further. "There have been reports of Iraqi Army units transporting weapons for militias and insurgents in military vehicles," he says, adding that some officers even receive money from truckers in return for assurances that the roads on which their convoys travel will be protected. <More at: www.csmonitor.com/2007/0710/p07s02-woiq.html>

US MILITARY DRAFTS PLAN TO KEEP TROOPS IN IRAQ UNTIL MID-2009

24 July 2007

The US military command in Iraq has drafted a plan that envisages US troops staying in the country for another two years, US military officials confirmed Tuesday. The New York Times reported that the campaign plan calls for restoring security in Baghdad and other local areas by the summer of 2008 and for "sustainable security" to be achieved across the country by the summer of 2009.

"The article is accurate," said Colonel Steven Boylan, a spokesman for General David Petraeus, the US commander in Iraq. A Pentagon spokesman also confirmed that a draft campaign plan has been prepared by the general's staff in Baghdad.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman, however, said no decisions had been made on US force levels in Iraq and "any timelines and troop strengths would be tied to conditions on the ground."

"It's not possible today to predict what the conditions may be in three months, six months or even a year down the road, but that doesn't and should not preclude military planning from taking place," said Bryan Whitman.

The strategy document calls for restoring security in Baghdad and other local areas by the summer of 2008 and for "sustainable security" to be achieved across Iraq by the summer of 2009, the newspaper wrote, citing unnamed US officials.

<More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20070724/wl_mideast_afp/usiraqilitary_070724163149>

THEN THERE IS THE OTHER WAR

TALIBAN MOVE CLOSER TO KABUL

Mark Sappenfield - Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor - July 24, 2007

Kabul, Afghanistan: The kidnapping of 23 South Korean aid workers last week on one of Afghanistan's major highways is the latest evidence that the Taliban is extending its reach closer to the capital, Kabul. The insurgency, which has blossomed in provinces bordering Pakistan – where the Taliban is widely believed to receive support – is spreading inland.

that the Taliban have consolidated enough power in border provinces to strike farther north, with an eye toward ringing Kabul from the south. Few analysts say that Kabul itself is in danger of direct attack, and none say it is in any danger of falling. But the situation echoes what happened to the Soviets two decades ago, when they maintained control of the cities and little else.

<More at: www.csmonitor.com/2007/0724/p01s03-wosc.html>

AND THERE IS ALWAYS THE LAST WAR, TOO, BUT THIS GUY HAS A VIEW THAT WOULDN'T MAKE ME FEEL VERY GOOD IF I WERE A MARINE ~ THIS IS A GOOD WAR BECAUSE WE AREN'T KILLING AS MANY OF US AS WE DID IN WWII!

HEAD OF MARINES SEES VIETNAM PARALLELS

Associated Press - July 11, 2007

SAN FRANCISCO - The head of the Marine Corps said he sees some similarities between the Iraq and Vietnam wars, including dogged insurgencies and an erosion of domestic support as each conflict dragged on. But Gen. James T. Conway, the Marine Corps commandant, said he saw as many differences, most notably the absence of a draft today. He criticized the media for reporting a drumbeat of bad news out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

"There's a level of negativism in our press today that our young troops find a little bit disconcerting," Conway said Tuesday night while addressing several hundred members of the Marines' Memorial Club. "I've talked to very few troops who have come back from theater who haven't had to go through about a two-week transition of saying, 'That's not what I saw taking place, but that's what the country's being shown every day.'"

Moreover, Conway said, terrorists are using the Western media to advance their causes.

... Conway offered an optimistic portrait of the Iraq war even as key allies of President Bush abandon the White House's stay-the-course strategy. Incremental progress is being made on a number of fronts, including the training of Iraqi security forces, he said.

"The fact is, there is no civil war taking place," Conway said, while acknowledging "there is certainly sectarian strife" inflamed by terrorists.

He called for perspective on the U.S. death toll in the war, which has surpassed 3,600 - roughly the number of troops who died in a 12-day period during World War II, he said. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,141982,00.html>

THERE'S EVEN A WAR OR TWO BEFORE THAT

PENTAGON RETHINKS TROOP CUTS IN EUROPE

Associated Press - July 24, 2007

WASHINGTON - Pentagon officials are considering whether to halt the drawdown of U.S. troops in Europe because of the war in Iraq and other world developments. A Defense Department official said Monday that some defense leaders are studying whether the 2002 plan to cut troops on the continent by nearly half still makes sense today with America's ongoing wars, worsening relations with Russia and Iran and a recent plan to expand the Army. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak about the proposal on the record.

<More at: www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-07-23-pentagon-troop-cuts_N.htm>

COURT TELLS U.S. TO REVEAL DATA ON DETAINEES AT GUANTÁNAMO

William Glaberson - July 21, 2007

A federal appeals court ordered the government yesterday to turn over virtually all its information on Guantánamo detainees who are challenging their detention, rejecting an effort by the Justice Department to limit disclosures and setting the stage for new legal battles over the government's reasons for holding the men indefinitely. The ruling, which came in one of the main court cases dealing with the fate of the detainees, effectively set the ground rules for scores of cases by detainees challenging the actions of Pentagon tribunals that decide whether terror suspects should be held as enemy combatants.

<More at: www.nytimes.com/2007/07/21/us/21gitmo.html>

LET'S HOPE THAT THEY ARE RAISING SAMURAI AND NOT VIKINGS, AND INSTILLING A CODE OF HONOR AND NOT OF DEATH. THE NATION NEEDS HONORABLE, RELUCTANT WARRIORS, NOT RAGING BERSERKERS.

EVERY MARINE TO BE A KUNG-FU FIGHTER

Stars and Stripes - Jeff Schogol - July 23, 2007

ARLINGTON, Va. - First the Marine Corps made Chuck Norris an honorary Marine. Now the Corps wants all Marines to follow in his footsteps. All Marines must now qualify for their tan belt in the Corps' version of martial arts by the end of 2007, Corps Commandant Gen. James Conway said in a recent Corps-wide message. ... The changes apply to all Marines, including reservists, said retired Lt. Col. Joseph C Shusko, director of the Martial Arts Center of Excellence.

<More at: <http://stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=55074&archive=true>>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
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
7/28 - 11/12	1300 -	Historical Society of Washington, DC	Exhibit: Wages of War: Bonus Army to Baghdad	www.historydc.org	202-383-1810
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
8/24		Duluth, MN	Resource Fair	Kara Cornils	651-292-0145
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
9/5	1100 - 1400	Radisson Hotel Boston 200 Stuart St, Boston MA	Career Fair		617-482-1800
9/5 - 8		20 Patton Cove Road Swannanoa, NC	Wall that Heals	Smoky Mountain Harley Owners Group	
9/8-10		Menlo Park, CA	Stand Down	Kate Severin	650-804-7194
9/8		Billings, MT	Resource Fair	Lori Hartford	406-896-0584

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

DOLE: NOTIFY MARINES OF TOXIC EXPOSURE

Associated Press - July 19, 2007

Military officials should directly inform hundreds of thousands of Marine families and workers that they drank and washed in toxin-contaminated water at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, Sen. Elizabeth Dole said Wednesday. Dole, R-N.C., wants to force the secretary of the Navy to locate and notify Marines and civilians who were exposed to the water up until the mid-1980s when the base shut down contaminated wells. <More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=3390982&CMP=OTC-RSSFeeds0312>>

SAIC ADDRESSES POSSIBLE DATA COMPROMISE

San Diego and McLean, Va. - July 20 - PRNewswire-FirstCall

Personal information of certain uniformed service members, family members and others was placed at risk for potential compromise while being processed by SAIC (NYSE: SAI) under several health care data contracts [TRICARE] for military service customers, the company said today. SAIC remedied the security lapses upon learning of them and began working with the customers to mitigate any potential impact. Forensic analysis has not yielded any evidence that any personal information was actually compromised; however, the possibility cannot be ruled out. SAIC is notifying approximately 580,000 households, some with more than one affected person. <More at: <http://investors.saic.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=193857&p=NewsArticle&i=1028628>>

VA REBUKED FOR BALKING ON AGENT ORANGE CARE

Henry Weinstein - Times Staff Writer - July 20, 2007

In a stinging ruling, a panel of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ripped into the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on Thursday for its continued resistance to paying benefits to veterans suffering from chronic lymphocytic leukemia because of their exposure to Agent Orange.

Thursday's 3-0 decision marked the sixth major ruling against the government by the appeals court or a federal trial judge in a case that started in 1986. It stemmed from a clash between Vietnam veterans and the government over a chemical defoliant used by U.S. armed forces to clear dense jungle in Southeast Asia.

"What is difficult for us to comprehend is why the Department of Veterans Affairs, having entered into a settlement agreement and agreed to a consent order some 16 years ago, continues to resist its implementation so vigorously, as well as to resist equally vigorously the payment of desperately needed benefits to Vietnam War veterans who fought for their country and suffered grievous injury as a result of our government's own conduct," Judge Stephen Reinhardt wrote in the opinion.

"Whether the Vietnam War was just or not, whether one favored or opposed it, one thing is clear. Those young Americans who risked their lives in their country's service and are even today suffering greatly as a result are deserving of better treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs than they are currently receiving," said Reinhardt.

<More at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-orange20jul20.0.1895893.story>>

VETERANS HOME CLOSED

Ryan Burr - Panama City, FL, New Herald - July 23, 2007

Bay County's only homeless veterans shelter has booted its residents because funding ran out. The eight men inside the Grace Avenue home were given a seven-day notice last week to leave the premise, and that deadline expired over the weekend. Although the woman who ran the program, Deborah Hanley, set out to assist an often forgotten segment of society, some of the veterans did not leave on cordial terms.

Hanley said she needed the veterans to sign a release form confirming that she was handing back their medical records and any payments the veterans had made to live there. Some men refused and they are at Panama City Rescue Mission figuring out what to do next. www.newsherald.com/headlines/article.display.php?a=2409

WAITING TO DIE: 'BLUE WATER' VETERANS SEEK HELP

Scarlet Sims - The Morning News - July 21, 2007

Lloyd Patrick Elnicki never asked what the Circle of Life Hospice nurse wrote in her evaluations every day. Secretly, he knew. "I'm dying, aren't I?" he asked his wife, Sharon.

"Well, Pat, you're not getting any better," she said.

Three years before, the Vietnam veteran was a robust man with pale skin, dark red hair and a goatee. He had a clover tattooed on his back -- for luck. ... Pat Elnicki applied for medical benefits related to Agent Orange exposure. His claim has never been processed because he's among a group of soldiers known as "Blue Water" veterans, who were stationed on Navy ships off the Vietnam coast. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs won't compensate Blue Water veterans, saying they weren't exposed to the herbicide. A 2001 federal court case protesting the policy continues.

Meanwhile, Vietnam veterans waiting for an answer are dying. "The bottom line is they are hoping some of these guys will die," said Don Olson, Benton County veterans service officer. "The facts just sort of speak for themselves. It's just a big stalling game." <More at: www.nwaonline.net/articles/2007/07/22/news/072207bzagentorange.txt>

ARMY ACKNOWLEDGES HEALTH CARE MISTAKES

Associated Press - July 21, 2007

FORT RILEY, Kan. - The Army's top civilian leader acknowledged Friday that the military has made mistakes in caring for wounded Soldiers and said the system is being fixed. During his first visit to an Army post since being confirmed by the Senate last week, Army Secretary Pete Geren spent several hours touring Fort Riley's Irwin Army Community Hospital, including a unit that began operating in June as a response to care problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

"We have a lot to learn. We had Soldiers who slipped through the cracks," Army Secretary Pete Geren told Soldiers during the tour. "We have Soldiers who let other Soldiers down." <More at: www.firstcoastnews.com/news/military/news-article.aspx?storyid=87377>

HELP LAGS FOR HOMELESS FEMALE VETERANS

Bina Venkataraman - Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor - July 18, 2007 edition

... An estimated 8,000 female veterans are homeless in the US -- the most in the nation's history and a number that is expected to increase as more women return from the war in Iraq. At the same time, services to help these women stay off the streets are lagging behind, say several experts who work with veterans' issues.

"With the likelihood of more women veterans coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan with a need for housing, it's going to be a major, major issue," says Cheryl Beversdorf, executive director of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, noting that there isn't enough housing to meet even current demands. "The VA is trying to gear up services for women, but frankly it's not enough given what we are dealing with." <More at: www.csmonitor.com/2007/0718/p02s01-usmi.html>

GAO REPORT: BILLIONS OF DOLLARS WASTED, YET VA AND DOD UNABLE TO SHARE VETERANS' MEDICAL RECORDS

Joseph Conn - Modern Healthcare Online - Jul 21, 2007

If the gist of Wednesday's Government Accountability Office report sounds familiar, that's because it is. For the past seven years, the GAO as a watchdog has been barking incessantly at the Veterans Affairs Department and the Military Health System over the inability of the two government-run healthcare organizations to exchange patient records between their clinical computer systems, which evolved from the same system, but were allowed to fork beyond interoperability.

But, according to the latest GAO report, there still is something about the recommendation to plan that neither the VA nor the Defense Department seems to understand. ... In the latest report, the GAO notes the VA and Defense Department combined have spent \$148.8 million thus far on their joint interoperability projects. That is in addition to the nearly \$1.3 billion the two have spent on HealtheVet VistA at the VA, the successor to its legacy VistA system, and AHLTA at the Defense Department, the replacement for its Composite Health Care System, or CHCS I. The rationale for both of the upgrades is, at least in part, to achieve interoperability between the military and veterans healthcare systems.

<More at: www.modernhealthcare.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070720/FREE/707200010/FRONTPAGE>

To see the GAO report, go to this link: www.gao.gov/new.items/d071108t.pdf

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF JULY 11, 2007

This week, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced a decrease. The net collective result is 1,023 fewer reservists mobilized than last week. At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 76,321; Navy Reserve, 5,007; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 5,530; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,901; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 301. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 93,060, including both units and individual augmentees.

A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2007/d20070711ngr.pdf.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 24 JULY 2007

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	3,637
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	26,558
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	≥27,689
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	116
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	4
KILLED UK	163
KILLED OTHER COALITION	129
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 7/20]	696
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 46,529
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 74,336 [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 (6/2007)	278
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (6/2007)	834
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (JULY 2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
AFGHAN REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL	1.4M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE [7/10]	\$446,008,388,000

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

U.S. FAILING TO HELP IRAQI TRANSLATOR AND FAMILY TARGETED FOR EXECUTION

Maura Stephens – AlterNet - July 10, 2007

... Andy is Iraqi. He has been an interpreter/translator for the U.S. military this whole time. The commanding officers of his units have written letters attesting to his competence, loyalty, resourcefulness, reliability and utter trustworthiness -- please forgive the redundancy, I'm quoting from their letters -- as well as to the fact that he must be evacuated to the United States quickly before he and his family are killed because of his work with the U.S. Army.

His family has been threatened too many times to count, and two-and-a-half years ago the threats proved all too real. Their house was bombed. Andy's father and brother were kidnapped. They were butchered the next day, their bodies dumped back at on the doorstep of the house ... Now Andy and Alysse and their babies are in grave and ceaseless danger. Most of Andy's extended family put them up at one time or another, but eventually had to ask them to leave when they were threatened for harboring a U.S. military employee. Andy now stays with his sister and in other places, and Alysse and the children stay with some of her relatives. The danger is constant, and Alysse is traumatized to the point, sometimes, of paralysis. She is 21 years old.

Although their situation is a direct result of Andy's work with the U.S. Army, the government of the United States is telling Andy: "Tough luck. It's too bad that you and your wife and babies will be killed because of your four years of service to us, but we simply don't care." <More at: www.alternet.org/waroniraq/56397/>

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