

# SOUND OFF!



VOL. VI, NO 3

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

*“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”*

20 NOVEMBER 2010

## FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

### VETERANS’ DAY ~ HO HUM

Well it’s that month again—you know, the one when Americans “honor veterans”. Most Americans really like Veterans’ Day because it is a day off, and the sales are great.

To tell the truth, they really like Memorial Day better because on that day they can “remember” the dead ones, but they don’t have to pay out any money to take care of them anymore.

One month from now, which will they remember—22.5 million veterans who served and are serving them, or the fact that they got a mattress for 50% off or four new automobile tires for the price of three? Wanna place a bet?

Those of us who are veterans know pretty much what we’ll remember, but we have to face it that we are very nearly alone in that memory. We truly don’t need a special day to remind us.

If the just-completed election season is any indication, Americans and their elected officials don’t even remember that there are two wars going on. Hardly a mention of them during the entire campaign either by candidates or by the press.

Since the election all we have heard is that veterans’ benefits are too expensive and have to be “trimmed”; instead we need to buy more nuclear weapons (we may have to destroy the earth more than 10 times over), and air superiority fighters (you never know when the Taliban might start buying the Eurofighter *Typhoons* or Russian Su-35 *Flankers*).

Oh yes, don’t forget that other proposal. In a country where all medical costs are inflated by an obscene percentage so that someone who is sitting somewhere on his fat ass can profit off of your

sickness, some of the elected officials now want to privatize VA healthcare. Given that the budget can’t increase by much more (according to those same politicians) then we will just lop off 30-40% of the VA Healthcare budget and turn it over to investors. You vets won’t mind, will you?

I have expressed in these pages before my frustration with the majority of quasi-patriotic speeches in “honor” of veterans. The “memorial” lasts just about as long as the speech, and then it’s back to business as usual, *and please don’t bother us again until next year.*

There is no question that war memorials are important, and every community should have one. When and if they come home, veterans need to know that at least in some small corner of their community, there is acknowledgement of their sacrifice.

The real memorial that is needed, however, is for all Americans to remember the sacrifice that so many have made on their behalf, and to do something meaningful about it.

The true memorial, and really the only one that is essential, is to step up and take care of our brothers and sisters who are alive yet wounded in body or mind, and to take care of the families of those who are wounded or who have fallen.

The cost cannot matter because the true price has already been paid.

If any of these politicians and bureaucrats would take the time to examine history, and particularly the time to read what our own founders and so many other wise and courageous people have said throughout time, they would be crying out for a world in which combat veterans were no longer produced. We all know that

that is never going to be completely true, but it still ought to be an underlying goal.

No, that does not mean replace the Department of Defense with a Department of Peace. It does mean, however, that we need to return the military option to its rightful place as the last to be chosen among all other foreign policy alternatives.

If all of America is unwilling to sacrifice—and they are unwilling—then we should not demand such terrible sacrifices from the few who do stand up.

If it is important enough to send these few off to bleed and die, then it should be important enough to pay the entire cost. Buying another nuclear weapon doesn't heal a wounded mind or body. Scrapping the purchase of a \$361M F-22 Raptor could very likely cover every penny of the co-pays and drug share costs of all of our veterans. Just think what dumping a squadron of them would do! And what about that \$89.5B bonus fund for the big 4 financial firms? Wow!

Isn't it interesting that we can calculate the total lifetime cost of a fighter plane, but we say that it is impossible to calculate the total lifetime cost of supporting a wounded veteran? Therefore the *modus operandi* is that we just won't try. We'll just kick that cost down the road and squabble over it year after year.

It is really discouraging that the people who are squabbling over the cost of supporting veterans, for the most part, aren't veterans themselves. They cannot possibly comprehend the cost they have already exacted from these citizens.

More than that, they deny that any of us can comprehend it. If they calculate the cost of an energy program they haul in all of the oil and coal executives. If they contemplate the cost of a financial program they drag in all of the brokers and bankers. They hang on their every word and come out touting corporate mission goals as policy statements for the country.

When they contemplate the cost of veterans' services, however, and the level of services that should be provided, they exclude veterans and bring in all of the stay-at-home experts who would neither serve themselves or permit their sons and daughters to serve.

Oh sure, they invite the chartered organizations to sit at the table during a single hearing with plenty of cameramen present, then go on about their business as usual ignoring any testimony that contradicts their predetermined position.

Amazing how our democracy works, isn't it? Maybe it wasn't meant to work for all of us.

If Veterans' Day is such an important holiday for all Americans, then answer these few questions and ask why you give the answer that you do.

- How many homeless veterans are on the streets of your town?
- How many veterans in your town have waited months or years to get an answer from the VA about their claim?
- How many veterans in your town have to decide between food and paying someone to take them to a VA clinic or hospital miles away?
- How many veterans in your town are being taken care of by family members who themselves have sacrificed alone to provide the services we all should be providing?
- How many veterans in your town are living in poverty?
- How many veterans in your town went off to war, came home, and did not get their job back, or if they did, didn't get the promotion and raises guaranteed them when they left?
- How many veterans are attending your local college or university who are dropping out because their GI Bill payments are late?
- How many veterans in your town are getting arrested for crimes such as spousal or child abuse, public drunkenness, or assault.
- How many veterans in your town have committed suicide?

By the way, do you or your stay-at-home neighbor know how many veterans there are in your town?

If "Governments are instituted among men" in order to secure the rights to equality, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness then why doesn't that apply to veterans? Shouldn't there be equal benefit and equal sacrifice? Shouldn't that government that derives "their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed" apply those powers equally and fairly to veterans as well? On balance, veterans should not be asked to continue to sacrifice after they come home: that confirms for them their inequality before the law and in the eyes of their fellow citizens.

**"From the equality of rights springs identity of our highest interests; you cannot subvert your neighbor's rights without striking a dangerous blow at your own."**

Carl Schurz

[Ed.]

## REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

### EDITORIAL COMMENT

I don't care where you stand on the political spectrum, we all have to condemn this attack by Glenn Beck on the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA). Beck's comments are not only unwarranted, they are knowingly false. Shame on him for lying about this outstanding organization! <http://blogdogcicle.blogspot.com/2010/11/rachel-maddow-annihilates-glenn-beck.html> [Ed.]

### NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program [www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm](http://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/](http://www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/). Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

## ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

### VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: On 12 August 2009 we appeared before the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. An article from the LA Times on 24 August summarizes the results so far < [http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24\\_0\\_1423297\\_story](http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24_0_1423297_story)>

#### .Case Progress to Date:

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

9/25/2007 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

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

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

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

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

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

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

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants' Reply Brief filed

6/11/09 Oral Arguments Scheduled for 12 August 2009

8/12/09 Oral arguments

9/14/09 Reply on mediation [changed date]

9/14/09 No agreement on mediation. 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit accepts the case.

11/20/10 NTR [The courts move veeerrrry slowly] There is a rumor that we may yet be heard this session. NOTE: There is no first-in-first-out rule in the Court of Appeals, and there is no time constraint on the court.

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. [www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/](http://www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/)

**BE A MEMBER** If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to [www.vuft.org/membership.html](http://www.vuft.org/membership.html) 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. at [www.vuft.org/membership.html](http://www.vuft.org/membership.html)

**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 at [www.vuft.org/donate.html](http://www.vuft.org/donate.html). 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.

# PLEASE DONATE!

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

There are 57 Disability Examination Worksheets in use both by the doctors of VHA (Veterans Health Administration) who do disability examinations and by the rating specialists, hearing officers, and Decision Review Officers of VBA (Veterans Benefits Administration) who do the disability evaluations. Go to web site <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/exams/>, click on type of Compensation & Pension Exam you have coming up, and review the worksheet prior to the examination. Also good guide for any civilian doctor. The examination worksheets are in Adobe PDF format. ~ "Colonel Dan"

## **RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS**

### **VETERAN'S LIFE INSPIRES PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IN VIRGINIA**

Michael Owens - October 30, 2010

Virginia Sen. Linda T. "Toddy" Puller, D-Mount Vernon, was thinking of her late Vietnam-vet husband when she sponsored the proposed constitutional amendment to exempt real-estate taxes for completely disabled veterans and their surviving spouses. The measure will be on the ballot for Tuesday's election.

A land mine ripped away both of Marine platoon leader Lewis Puller Jr.'s legs and parts of his hands. Decades later, he won a Pulitzer Prize for chronicling his bouts with the depression and alcoholism that followed him from Southeast Asia. He committed suicide in 1994. <More at: [www2.tricities.com/news/2010/oct/30/veterans-life-inspires-proposed-constitutional-ame-ar-617394/](http://www2.tricities.com/news/2010/oct/30/veterans-life-inspires-proposed-constitutional-ame-ar-617394/)>

### **CONGRESSMAN QUESTIONS HOSPITAL RELEASE OF VETERAN WHO SUBSEQUENTLY DIED**

McClatchy Newspapers - Nov. 13, 2010

BILOXI, Miss -- BILOXI, Miss. - U.S. Rep. Gene Taylor said the Veteran Affairs Hospital in Biloxi failed the "Is this the way you would want your dad treated?" test by releasing a reluctant veteran from the emergency room, only to have him die in the back seat of a cab in the predawn hours of Oct. 20.

"I think they did everything professionally that they had to do, and a little more," Taylor said, "but what they failed at, and I think they would tell you this, is that this is not the way they would have treated their dad and I think that's what these veterans deserve." <More at: [www.sacbee.com/2010/11/13/3182396/congressman-questions-hospital.html](http://www.sacbee.com/2010/11/13/3182396/congressman-questions-hospital.html)>

## **RETREAT – NEWS**

### **U.S. MARINES BEGIN TO HAND OVER SMALL BASES TO AFGHAN ARMY IN SOUTHWEST**

Rajiv Chandrasekaran - Washington Post Staff Writer - November 2, 2010

NAWA, AFGHANISTAN - U.S. Marines have begun handing over some of their small bases to the Afghan army in this once-volatile district in the country's southwest, a transition that top military commanders intend to cite as proof that the Obama administration's troop escalation and counterinsurgency strategy are succeeding.

<More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/01/AR2010110106069.htm](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/01/AR2010110106069.htm)>

### **BUT ...**

### **AFGHANISTAN COMBAT ROLE COULD PASS 2014**

Associated Press - November 17, 2010

KABUL, Afghanistan -- NATO forces may still lead some combat operations in Afghanistan beyond 2014, the target date for shifting authority to Afghan troops, the alliance's top civilian in the country said Wednesday. The comment was the latest indication that the U.S.-led military operation in Afghanistan will continue to be sizable well into the next decade, despite plans to draw down troops and transfer responsibility to the Afghan government.

<More at: [www.military.com/news/article/nato-afghanistan-combat-role-could-pass-2014.html](http://www.military.com/news/article/nato-afghanistan-combat-role-could-pass-2014.html)>

### **MEANWHILE...**

### **AS PROSPECTS DIM IN IRAQ, THE PENTAGON DIGS IN DEEPER IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Nick Turse 11/17/2010

The construction projects are sprouting like mushrooms: walled complexes, high-strength weapons vaults, and underground bunkers with command and control capacities -- and they're being planned and funded by a military force intent on embedding itself ever more deeply in the Middle East. If Iran were building these facilities, it would be front-page news and American hawks would be talking war, but that country's Revolutionary Guards aren't behind this building boom, nor are the Syrians, Lebanon's Hezbollah, or some set of al-Qaeda affiliates. It's the U.S. military that's digging in, hardening, improving, and expanding its garrisons in and around the Persian Gulf at the very moment when it is officially in a draw-down phase in Iraq.

<More at: [http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175321/tomgram%3A\\_nick\\_turse%2C\\_off-base\\_america\\_/](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175321/tomgram%3A_nick_turse%2C_off-base_america_/)>

## **OBAMA'S NEW START TREATY PROSPECTS FADE**

Associated Press - November 17, 2010

WASHINGTON -- An agreement between the United States and Russia to slash their nuclear arsenals was in danger of collapse after an influential Republican senator said it should not be voted on this year. With a terse statement Tuesday, Sen. Jon Kyl dealt a major setback to President Obama's efforts to improve ties with Russia and to his broader strategy for reducing nuclear arms worldwide. The treaty, known as New START, had been seen as one of Obama's top foreign policy accomplishments. <More at: <http://www.military.com/news/article/obamas-new-start-treaty-prospects-fade.html>>

## **CLINTON AND GATES: WHY THE SENATE SHOULD RATIFY NEW START**

Hillary Rodham Clinton and Robert M. Gates - November 15, 2010

For decades, American inspectors have monitored Russian nuclear forces, putting into practice President Ronald Reagan's favorite maxim, "Trust, but verify." But since the old START Treaty expired last December, we have relied on trust alone. Until a new treaty comes into force, our inspectors will not have access to Russian missile silos and the world's two largest nuclear arsenals will lack the stability that comes with a rigorous inspection regime.

Before this session of Congress ends, we urge senators to approve an arms control treaty that would again allow U.S. inspectors access to Russian strategic sites and reduce the number of nuclear weapons held by both nations to a level not seen since the 1950s. <More at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/14/AR2010111403884.html>>

## **CONSERVATIVES SPLIT WITH U.S. MILITARY LEADERS OVER U.S.-RUSSIA NUKE TREATY**

Mary Beth Sheridan - Washington Post Staff Writer - November 19, 2010

An unusual split has opened between conservative Republicans and the American military leadership over the U.S.-Russia nuclear treaty, with current and former generals urging swift passage but politicians expressing far more skepticism.

Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has called the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) "essential to our future security." Retired generals have been so concerned about getting it ratified that some have traveled around the country promoting it.

Seven of eight former commanders of U.S. nuclear forces have urged the Senate to approve the treaty.

But five Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said in a recent report that New START was "a bad deal." They added that U.S. military leaders had made assumptions about the pact - including that Russia will honor it - that are "optimistic in the extreme." <More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/19/AR2010111906497.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/19/AR2010111906497.html)>

## **OBAMA MAY OPT FOR NEW MILITARY ADVISERS**

Rowan Scarborough - The Washington Times - October 18, 2010

President Obama, who has clashed with the military top brass over war and gays, will soon have a chance to reshape the Joint Chiefs of Staff as he faces contentious decisions next year on withdrawing troops from Afghanistan and on ending some weapons systems.

... Mr. Obama has had differences with some of them. The outgoing Marine Corps commandant, Gen. James Conway, for example, has openly questioned the White House's July 2011 deadline to start a troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Mr. Obama and his top military adviser clashed privately over Afghanistan troop strength, a new book reveals.

<More at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/oct/18/obama-may-opt-for-new-military-advisers/>>

## **PENTAGON'S CYBER COMMAND SEEKS AUTHORITY TO EXPAND ITS BATTLEFIELD**

Ellen Nakashima - Washington Post Staff Writer - November 6, 2010

The Pentagon's new Cyber Command is seeking authority to carry out computer network attacks around the globe to protect U.S. interests, drawing objections from administration lawyers uncertain about the legality of offensive operations.

Cyber Command's chief, Gen. Keith B. Alexander, who also heads the National Security Agency, wants sufficient maneuvering room for his new command to mount what he has called "the full spectrum" of operations in cyberspace.

Offensive actions could include shutting down part of an opponent's computer network to preempt a cyber-attack against a U.S. target or changing a line of code in an adversary's computer to render malicious software harmless. They are operations that destroy, disrupt or degrade targeted computers or networks.

<More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/05/AR2010110507304.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/05/AR2010110507304.html)>

## **PRESIDENT OBAMA PRESENTS THE MEDAL OF HONOR TO STAFF SERGEANT SALVATORE GIUNTA: "WE'RE ALL IN YOUR DEBT"**

16 November 2010



[Read the Transcript](#) | Download Video: [mp4](#) (226MB) | [mp3](#) (22MB)

## **HERE'S ONE WAY TO GET YOUR CLAIM HEARD!**

### **TOP STORIES - FEDS INVESTIGATE THREAT AGAINST VA, FIND ROCKET LAUNCHER**

DAYTON -- Miami Township police say they are assisting federal agents with an investigation involving two veterans and their alleged plot against the Dayton VA. The FBI is not releasing the names of the two men involved and say no one has been criminally charged in the case. "Two individuals that basically discussed a plot to show up at the VA center and basically shoot a bunch of people," said Miami Township public information officer, John DiPietro. That information flooded into Miami Township's police department and originated at the Veterans Administration Police Department. Police say the two men are veterans and have used the center's services. <More at: [http://abc.daytonsnewsresource.com/shared/newsroom/top\\_stories/videos/wkef\\_vid\\_4601.shtml](http://abc.daytonsnewsresource.com/shared/newsroom/top_stories/videos/wkef_vid_4601.shtml)>

### **DOD STUDY: MOST TROOPS, FAMILIES OK WITH GAYS**

Associated Press - October 29, 2010

WASHINGTON -- An internal Pentagon study has found that most U.S. troops and their families don't care whether gays are allowed to serve openly and think the policy of "don't ask, don't tell" could be done away with, according to officials familiar with its findings. The survey results were expected to be used by gay rights advocates to bolster their argument that the 1993 law on gays could be repealed immediately with little harm done to the military. But the survey also was expected to reveal challenges the services could face in overturning the long-held policy, including overcoming fierce opposition in some parts of the military even if they represent a minority. <More at: <http://www.military.com/news/article/dod-study-most-troops-families-ok-with-gays.html>>

### **GENERAL: K-9 TEAMS FIND IEDS BETTER THAN \$10 BILLION TECH GEAR**

Shaun Waterman - The Washington Times - October 20, 2010

The Army general in charge of defeating roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan says the most effective tool is "two men and a dog," even though the military has spent nearly \$10 billion on new detection and clearing technologies.

... Gen. Oates said technology, like the electronic frequency jammers used in Iraq to prevent bombs from being detonated by cell phones or TV remotes, has been successful, but the highest detection rates were still achieved using K-9 units and trained handlers. <More at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/oct/20/general-k-9-teams-find-ieds-better-10-billion-tech/>>

### **TARGET, 'WAR HERO DOG' WHO SAVED 50 SOLDIERS IN AFGHANISTAN, MISTAKENLY PUT TO DEATH IN AZ SHELTER**

Philip Caulfield - DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER - November 16th 2010

A heroic former stray from Afghanistan, Target, right, was mistakenly euthanized at an Arizona shelter. Target and Rufus, above left, saved dozens of soldiers from a suicide bomb in February. Target was a stray in Afghanistan who befriended soldiers and was hailed as a hero after she chased away a suicide bomber who tried to blow up a military base last February. <More at: [www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2010/11/16/2010-11-16\\_target\\_hero\\_dog\\_who\\_saved\\_50\\_soldiers\\_in\\_afghanistan\\_mistakenly\\_put\\_to\\_death\\_in.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2010/11/16/2010-11-16_target_hero_dog_who_saved_50_soldiers_in_afghanistan_mistakenly_put_to_death_in.html)>



## AND JUSTICE IS DONE

### ARIZONA WORKER FIRED FOR EUTHANIZING WAR HERO DOG

(AP) – 11/19/10

FLORENCE, Ariz. (AP) — A county employee in Arizona has been fired after mistakenly euthanizing a dog that saved soldiers in Afghanistan and lived through explosions in the war-torn country, officials announced Friday.

<More at: [www.miamiherald.com/2010/11/19/1934473/az-county-employee-fired-for-euthanizing.html](http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/11/19/1934473/az-county-employee-fired-for-euthanizing.html)>

### **TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
11/18-11/21		Lake Shores Mall Sebring FL	The Wall That Heals	Highlands County Veterans Association	
11/22		Freeport, NY	Resource Fair	<a href="#">Michael Kilbride</a>	516-227-8731
12/2-5		Morgan City Municipal Auditorium Morgan City, LA	The Wall That Heals	City of Morgan City	
12/3-5		Yuma, AZ	Stand Down	<a href="#">William J. "Bill" Thornton</a>	928-503-0552

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

### **TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES**

### **GUESS IT DEPENDS ON WHO REPORTS THE STORY, DOESN'T IT? NOW IF WE COULD ONLY GET ACCEPTED INTO THE SYSTEM!!!**

#### VA HEALTH SYSTEM SHINES IN QUALITY-OF-CARE STUDY

November 8, 2010

WASHINGTON -- A report now appearing online in the national publication Medical Care finds that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system generally outperforms the private sector in following recommended processes for patient care.

"This report is strong evidence of the advancements VA continues to make in improving health care over the past 15 years," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "The systems and quality-improvement measures VA actively uses are second to none, and the results speak for themselves." <More at: [www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1994](http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1994)>

#### STUDY: VA OFFERS AVERAGE CARE

Knight Ridder - November 13, 2010

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs has for years touted the achievements of its health care system, but a new study shows that its health outcomes are ... about like everybody else's. The VA highlighted the study, published in the journal Medical Care, saying in a press release this week that "VA Health System Shines in Quality-of-Care Study."

... the study - which synthesized the results of three dozen other studies that compared VA health care to care provided by non-VA providers - concluded that the VA performed well on many measures of medical care, but also found that the VA had little impact on the key question of whether the patient lived or died. Moreover, most of the research the study depended on to reach its conclusions dates to when Bill Clinton was president. One source for the study is dated 1991, when George H.W. Bush was in the White House. <More at: [www.military.com/news/article/study-va-offers-average-care.html](http://www.military.com/news/article/study-va-offers-average-care.html)>

### **DOES THIS READ LIKE, "IT'S JUST A JOB, LIKE ANY OTHER"?**

#### TELECONFERENCING FROM THE WAR ZONE IMPROVES TREATMENT FOR WOUNDED SOLDIERS

David Brown - October 30, 2010

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, AFGHANISTAN -- It's a heart-stopping and heartbreaking catalogue of the mayhem, heroics and human toll of modern war. Every Thursday afternoon doctors, nurses and medics gather in a conference room at the military hospital here, linked by telephone or videocam to colleagues at all the combat hospitals in Afghanistan, and at military

hospitals in Europe and the United States. Over two hours, this virtual assembly of about 80 people reviews the care of every U.S. service member critically injured in Afghanistan in the previous week.

Among the 13 discussed at one recent meeting, nine will have permanent disabilities: Two lost one leg; two lost a leg and a foot; two lost both legs; two lost both legs and a hand; and one was paralyzed from the waist down. Three of the nine also lost their genitals. <More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/29/AR2010102906782.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/29/AR2010102906782.html)>

## **THREE EXCELLENT ARTICLES ON THE COMPLEXITIES OF BRAIN INJURY & PTSD**

### **THE WARRIOR'S BRAIN**

Andrew Bast – Newsweek - November 08, 2010

One family's terrifying medical mystery could represent the military's next big crisis.

The worst was the day Brooke Brown came home to find her husband with a shotgun in his mouth. But there had been plenty of bad days before that: after he returned from a deployment in Iraq, Lance Cpl. David Brown would start shaking in crowded places. Sitting down for a family meal had become nearly impossible: in restaurants he'd frantically search for the quickest exit route. He couldn't concentrate; he couldn't do his job. The Marine Corps placed him on leave prior to discharging him. Brooke quit her job to care for him and the children. The bills piled up.

<More at: [www.newsweek.com/2010/11/08/veteran-s-head-injuries-confound-military-doctors.html](http://www.newsweek.com/2010/11/08/veteran-s-head-injuries-confound-military-doctors.html)>

### **'A SOLDIER'S HEART': 3-DAY SPECIAL SERIES**

Michael A. Fuoco - Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Caring for the invisible wounds that warriors bring home <More at: [www.post-gazette.com/pg/10311/1100779-455.stm](http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10311/1100779-455.stm)>

### **SPECIAL REPORT - FOR U.S. VETERANS, THE WAR AFTER THE WARS**

Nick Carey Nov 9, 2010

FOREST CITY, Iowa (Reuters) - Deep in America's heartland, this small town is a world away from the heat of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan. But it is here in Forest City and communities across the country that families like the Jordals will battle the legacy of both conflicts for decades to come.

Surrounded by red, white and blue Americana in their powder blue Midwestern home, family matriarch Rhonda Jordal says she can deal with most of the fallout of her son Steven's two tours in Iraq. Rhonda says she can handle his damaged memory -- Steven nearly started a fire recently when he forgot his breakfast on the stove and wandered off to feed the family's two border collies -- his daily headaches, his irritability, the 635 days it took to get him out of jail in Oklahoma City and the mountain of debt the family faces because of legal fees. But what breaks her heart is that he will not let her hug or kiss him like he did before he went to war. "All the time he was in Iraq all I wanted was to get my baby back home," Rhonda said, breaking down for the first time in nearly five hours of talking about her son. "But I know now he's never really coming back."

<More at: [www.swissinfo.ch/eng/news/international/Special\\_report - For U.S. veterans. the war after the wars.html?cid=28748416](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/news/international/Special_report_-_For_U.S._veterans._the_war_after_the_wars.html?cid=28748416)

### **PTSD LINKED TO HARDENED ARTERIES**

Coalition for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans 11/19/10

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects more than the mind. The disorder may damage blood vessels and increase the risk of dying early, according to new research presented today at an annual meeting of the American Heart Association.

The study included about 286,000 mostly male veterans between the ages of 45 and 81 who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and conflicts dating back to the Korean War.

The vets with PTSD — who accounted for roughly 10 percent of the study participants — had more than double the risk of dying during the 10-year study compared to their peers who didn't have disorder, the researchers found.

<More at: <http://coalitionforveterans.org/2010/11/ptsd-linked-to-hardened-arteries/>

## **MILITARY PAY AND TRICARE UNDER FIRE**

Terry Howell - November 11, 2010

The first shots over the bow were fired earlier this spring when Sen. Webb (D-Va.) floated the idea that military pay and benefits were unsustainable. A DoD advisory panel later recommended increasing TRICARE premiums and ending the trend of annual across-the-board military pay raises which outpace the civilian sector pay increases.

Webb recently called for reducing troops and replacing the across-the-board raises with targeted bonuses and raises based on combat assignments and/or job specialties. Webb's recommendations drew heavy fire from military communities. But that is nothing compared to the battle that is likely to come based on the recommendations made by the Presidential "blue ribbon" debt panel.

... The plan includes: raise TRICARE premiums, fees and co-pays; add enrollment fee to TRICARE; subject TRICARE to "PAYGO" rules, guaranteeing future rate increases; freeze federal civilian pay for three years; bring home 50,000 military personnel from overseas (but not from the war zone); close all remaining DoD stateside schools; reduce COLA formula; eliminate 20 year retirement for military – benefits payable at age 60. <More at: [www.military.com/features/0,15240,222602,00.html](http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,222602,00.html)>

### **THERE'S MORE**

#### **BIG RETIREMENT CUTS FOR CURRENT TROOPS?**

On Wednesday, the Bipartisan Policy Center released the recommendations of a privately funded Budget Reduction Task Force with the goal of bringing the federal debt below 60 percent of GDP by 2020.

This group, co-chaired by former Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) and former Congressional Budget Office Director Alice Rivlin, is independent of the President's Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, whose co-chairs issued a separate deficit-cutting proposal last week (see box above).

Among a broad range of other proposals, the Rivlin-Domenici plan would dramatically alter the military retirement system by:

- Shifting it to a 401(k)-style system involving member contributions and variable government matching (depending on skill, retention needs, etc., each year),
- Basing retired pay on the highest five years' average basic pay (vs. the current three years),
- Delaying eligibility for immediate retired pay until age 57 for those with 20 or more years' service, and
- Vesting retirement benefits for members with 10 or more years of service

They estimate this would reduce long-term military retirement costs by 50%.

To help achieve those savings, the Rivlin-Domenici plan would shift all currently serving troops with less than 15 years of service to the new system! <More at: [www.moaa.org/action/lac\\_issues/lac\\_issues\\_update/lac\\_issues\\_update\\_101119.htm#issue3](http://www.moaa.org/action/lac_issues/lac_issues_update/lac_issues_update_101119.htm#issue3)>

#### **VETERANS' CAREGIVING OFTEN FALLS TO SPOUSE**

Bill Hendrick - WebMD Health News - Nov. 10, 2010

##### **96% of Veterans' Caregivers Are Women, and the Burden Can Be Heavy, Study Finds**

When veterans with service-related injuries or illness need caregivers, the role typically falls on women, usually spouses or partners, a new report finds.

The study by the National Alliance for Caregiving and the United Health Foundation reports that 96% of veterans' caregivers are women, compared to an overall nationwide finding that 65% of family caregivers are women. The study also says that 70% of veterans' caregivers are their spouses or partners, compared to 6% nationally.

<More at: <http://women.webmd.com/news/20101109/veterans-caregiving-often-falls-to-spouse>>

#### **CHILDREN OF DEPLOYED MORE LIKELY TO SEEK MENTAL HEALTH CARE**

Elaine Wilson - American Forces Press Service - Nov 17, 2010

WASHINGTON, Nov. 16, 2010 -- Young children from military families are more likely to seek mental and behavioral health care when a parent is deployed than when a parent is at home, a military study has concluded.

Findings also show that children of married couples, with the father as the servicemember, are more likely to seek care than children with a married military mother or with a single servicemember parent, .... The study, which included more than a half million children from Active Duty families, will be published in the December issue of the journal "Pediatrics" and was posted on the journal's website Nov. 8. <More at: [www.army.mil/news/2010/11/17/48218-children-of-deployed-more-likely-to-seek-mental-health-care/](http://www.army.mil/news/2010/11/17/48218-children-of-deployed-more-likely-to-seek-mental-health-care/)>

### **MILITARY SUICIDES AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY**

W.E. Linde - Nov 16, 2010

The statistics are staggering: from 2001-2009, more than 1,100 service members have committed suicide. To drive that number home, that's more than has been killed in Afghanistan during the same period. According to the American Forces Press Service, "Suicide rates have nearly doubled in the military in the past five years." And the numbers are remaining high. The US Army alone reported that there was a rise from 13 potential suicides among active duty soldiers in August, to 18 potential suicides in September (investigations are required in order to rule conclusively that these were in fact suicides).

The suspected causes of this surge in suicides are actually easy to appreciate: the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, taken individually are severe enough to inflict severe psychological trauma. But the heavy operational strain on our forces has required multiple deployments into deadly environments. Even with "dwell" time built in between deployments, other commitments for the recovering service member dilute the quality of any time at home, which reduces the ability to recover before heading out the door again.

<More at: [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ac/20101116/us\\_ac/7192528\\_military\\_suicides\\_an\\_american\\_tragedy;\\_ylt=An29JjSADEqOzadCOZf9Vl0fNdF](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ac/20101116/us_ac/7192528_military_suicides_an_american_tragedy;_ylt=An29JjSADEqOzadCOZf9Vl0fNdF)>

### **AFTER SERVICE, VETERAN DEATHS SURGE**

Aaron Glantz - New York Times - October 16, 2010

The high suicide rate among veterans has already emerged as a major issue for the military and the families and loved ones of military personnel. But Mr. Santos's death is part of a larger trend that has remained hidden: a surge in the number of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans who have died not just as a result of suicide, but also because of vehicle accidents, motorcycle crashes, drug overdoses or other causes after being discharged from the military.

An analysis of official death certificates on file at the State Department of Public Health reveals that more than 1,000 California veterans under 35 died between 2005 and 2008. That figure is three times higher than the number of California service members who were killed in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts over the same period.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/2010/10/17/us/17bcvets.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/17/us/17bcvets.html)>

### **MULLEN WARNS OF STRAIN ON ARMED FORCES**

Craig Whitlock - October 27, 2010

The nation's top military officer told an Army audience Wednesday that the United States is only beginning to confront the strain that a decade of war has placed on its armed forces, warning that post-traumatic stress, suicides and unemployment are likely to persist among veterans for years to come.

"I believe what we can see today is truly just the tip of the iceberg, with consequences for our military and veteran health-care system, our national employment rate and even homelessness," Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Association of the U.S. Army's national convention in Washington. <More at:

[http://voices.washingtonpost.com/checkpoint-washington/2010/10/mullen\\_warns\\_of\\_strain\\_on\\_arme.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/checkpoint-washington/2010/10/mullen_warns_of_strain_on_arme.html)>

### **DID THEY JUST FIND OUT THAT THEY HAVE A PROBLEM?**

### **DOD ESTABLISHES WOUNDED WARRIOR TASK FORCE**

November 19, 2010

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness announced today the names of 14 people who will serve on the Department of Defense Task Force for Care, Management, and Transition of Recovering Wounded, Ill, and Injured Members of the Armed Forces.

The four year mission of the congressionally directed task force is to provide independent advice and recommendations to the department, ensuring comprehensive services are provided to wounded members of the armed forces and their families.

<More at: [www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=14082](http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=14082)>

## **PROGRAM EASING MEDICAL SEPARATION ROLLS OUT FORCE-WIDE**

Karen Parrish - American Forces Press Service - Nov 18, 2010

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18, 2010 -- A pilot program that eases medical separation and speeds benefit payments for servicemembers too wounded, sick or injured to stay in the military will soon roll out to the entire force.

"We are proud that the disability evaluation system is making progress," a senior defense official said this week. "Our people are committed to not only expanding this faster disability system, but we are just as committed to making it even faster and fairer for our transitioning service men and women - our work here is not done."

John R. Campbell, defense deputy undersecretary for wounded warrior care and transition policy, said the Integrated Disability Evaluation System is a joint effort between the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments.

<More at: [www.army.mil/news/2010/11/18/48324-program-easing-medical-separation-rolls-out-forcewide/](http://www.army.mil/news/2010/11/18/48324-program-easing-medical-separation-rolls-out-forcewide/)>

## **LEJEUNE WATER 'UNDOUBTEDLY A HAZARD'**

Hope Hodge - 2010-10-27

Serious omissions in a report on historical drinking water at Camp Lejeune render the results inaccurate, a director at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) told Navy and Marine Corps officials.

<More at: [www.jdnews.com/news/report-84143-lejeune-agency.html](http://www.jdnews.com/news/report-84143-lejeune-agency.html)>

## **ARMY: FT. BRAGG INFANT DEATHS A CRITICAL ISSUE**

(AP) - Oct. 29, 2010

The secretary of the Army says officials are doing everything they possibly can to figure out why 10 infants have died inside homes at Fort Bragg in the past three years.

Secretary John McHugh said Friday during a visit to the post that it is a critically important issue for the Army. He called the matter a "frustrating mystery." <More at: [www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/10/29/national/main7004673.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/10/29/national/main7004673.shtml)>

## **PRUDENTIAL VETERAN ACCOUNTS 'DISHONEST,' AMERICAN LEGION SAYS**

David Glovin and David Evans - Nov 2, 2010

Prudential Financial Inc.'s practice of collecting interest on unpaid veterans' life-insurance benefits is "unlawful and dishonest," the American Legion told a judge yesterday.

The American Legion, the largest U.S. veterans' service organization with 2.5 million members in almost 14,000 posts worldwide, asked permission to file a legal brief supporting a pending case in Springfield, Massachusetts, against Prudential Insurance Co. of America, a unit of Newark, New Jersey-based Prudential Financial.

The pending lawsuit by the families of deceased veterans accuses the insurer of failing to pay beneficiaries in a lump sum as required by U.S. law and the language of the policies. Instead, the lawsuit says that Prudential strongly encourages beneficiaries to keep the money in accounts with the company, which pays them a small amount of interest.

<More at: [www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-11-01/prudential-life-insurance-accounts-unlawful-american-legion-tells-court.html](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-11-01/prudential-life-insurance-accounts-unlawful-american-legion-tells-court.html)>

## **AFTER 16 YEARS OF USERRA. THE SUPREMES FINALLY WEIGH IN ON A CASE**

### **SUPREME COURT HEARS CASE OF FIRED RESERVIST**

Bryant Jordan - Military.com - November 03, 2010

The Supreme Court on Tuesday heard the case of an Army reservist who alleges he was fired from his job in 2004 because he was deployed by the military. The case is the first that the high court has considered involving the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Army Reserve Sgt. Vincent Staub of Illinois claims two supervisors, resentful that his military duties called him away from work, set him up to be fired for poor performance. Staub made his claim under USERRA, which was enacted by Congress to make sure employers don't fire reservists just because they are called to serve.

At the heart of the case is whether Staub's employer, Proctor Hospital of Peoria, Ill., can be held liable for a firing prompted by managers but carried out by a proxy.

... The Justice Department weighed in on Staub's side. "An employer is liable under USERRA when a supervisor acting with a discriminatory motive uses a delegated authority to cause an adverse employment action," attorney Eric Miller told the court. Under USERRA, he said, military status has only to be "a motivating factor" in the decision by the employer in the firing. <More at: [www.military.com/news/article/supreme-court-hears-case-of-fired-reservist.html](http://www.military.com/news/article/supreme-court-hears-case-of-fired-reservist.html)>

## TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

### OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SATURDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2010

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,802 DAYS)	OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (3,331 DAYS)
KILLED US 4,427/2	KILLED US 1398
WOUNDED US [11/10/10] 31,934/53	WOUNDED US [11/10/10] 9,256
OTHER US CASUALTIES [11/10/10] 40,474/329	OTHER CASUALTIES US [11/10/10] 11,697
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [11/10/10] 217/0	DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [11/10/10] 45
MISSING OR CAPTURED US 1	MISSING OR CAPTURED US 1
KILLED UK 179	KILLED COALITION 826
KILLED OTHER COALITION 139	WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07) 1,602
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION 1,819	KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY[7/4/09] ≥ 11,152
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08] 1,182	KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010) ≥ 8,813
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09] ≥ 48,874	WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009) 46,322
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [11/20/10] ≥ 107,932–1,366,350	AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07] 1.75M/4.8M
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [9/20/10] ≥ 400K–1.556M	COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE \$742,968,450,383
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07] 2.1M/2.5M	COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE \$367,116,105,200

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

### NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF NOVEMBER 16, 2010

This week the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Marine Corps announced an increase. The net collective result is 2,370 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 72,194; Navy Reserve, 6,461; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 9,684; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,110; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 791. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 94,240, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found on line at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20101116ngr2.pdf>

## AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

### US OFFERS \$34M TO CLEAR AGENT ORANGE AT DA NANG AIRPORT

November, 19 2010 10:00:00

HA NOI — The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has told the Da Nang People's Committee that it plans to spend US\$34 million to rid the city's airport of Agent Orange. The two-year project is intended to ensure that plants can again grow in contaminated earth. Former military airports in central Binh Dinh Province's Phu Cat District and southern Dong Nai Province's Bien Hoa District will be next on the list for detoxification, says USAID.

During the past three years, with funding provided by various American non-governmental organisations, the agency has approved spending of US\$21 million to deal with dioxin contamination in the country, according to Da Nang City's Department of Foreign Affairs.

<More at: <http://vietnamnews.vnagency.com.vn/Social-Issues/205849/US-offers-34m-to-clear-Agent-Orange-at-Da-Nang-Airport.html>>



## 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](mailto: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 <mailto:scook@vuft.org>

If you need to call us, our number is 1.805.530.6417.

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