

SOUND OFF!



VOL. III, NO 11

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

25 JANUARY 2008

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

THE HOME OF THE {ONCE WERE} BRAVE

We look on ourselves as a “brave nation”, that is, a nation of mostly brave people, with a brave historical purpose. History often bears that view out. We have faced the most cruel and wicked powers in history over our two-plus centuries, and we have won.

Not that bravery equates to winning; rather, it equates to being willing to fight, willing to stand up for something important, and willing to die if necessary for those principles we believe to be “American” – honor, human rights, personal dignity, fairness, justice.

Why is it, then, that we have recently come up with such a gang of cowards as our leaders? Before anyone goes ballistic, I am not aiming that comment at the present administration alone, rather at all of our leaders - political, business, the press, military, religious - with very few exceptions.

While physical cowardice often involves overwhelming fear, most other forms of cowardice always involve profound hypocrisy.

I won't bore you with a long dissertation on “chicken hawk” cowardice. We have a raft of such “predators” in congress and the administration today, and we have had them through all time; they just seem to be more prevalent now. They were “chickens” then and are “hawks” now. Their cowardice is not just that they were never willing to put their own lives on the line, it is in their willingness to put your life and your child's life on the line, all the while bleating their hypocrisy about duty and honor, shoving you and yours out in front while they politely hang back. Apparently their view is that it is your duty and their honor. They are the same cowards who will not face up to their previous errors, admit them, and do something about fixing them.

They are also the same cowards who have become the playground bullies of the world, only the play is war, and exploitation, and theft, and greed. Like all bullies, they are cowards because they use the one thing that they have going for them – great strength and a willingness to use it – as a substitute for reason and negotiation. What's worse, they enjoy it!

They don't just bully us on the playground, they bully each other. Congress passes laws (U.S.C. Article I) and the Executive instead of executing the law or vetoing it (U.S.C. Article II), ignores it, or signs it and breaks it.

I always believed that if you made a mistake, and it was going to affect your boss, the best thing you could do was to go to him or her and say, “Boss I f***ed up, but I know how to fix it and I'll take care of it.” Congress, of course, generally forgets that we are their bosses, and they certainly aren't going to have the courage to tell us that they f***ed up. Beyond that, they blame the administration, or the “times” or the “enemy” or whatever, as long as they are not obliged to blame themselves.

When they have really f***ed up, their favorite dissembling argument is that the “American people” won't stand for the cost of the fix. Of course they never ask us, because they are frightened that if they even raise the question, we will vote them out of office. So we end up bearing the cost of their horrid mistakes when we would gladly pay the cost of the repair, and we especially would pay to do it right the first time.

Military leaders have an obligation to tell the truth to their bosses too, and when they don't – when they polish their “truth” to match the politicians' desires – they exhibit another kind of cowardice. Careerist cowardice involves protecting your ass and your next promotion, and apparently no amount of hypocrisy is too much to achieve that goal. But when they exhibit careerist cowardice at the top, it is the soldier on the ground who suffers. Where is the general who will lay his stars on the president's desk and say, “I cannot subject my citizen-soldiers to the disastrous effects of your political decisions.”? Of course, the political cowards eliminate any military leader who tells them an unwelcome truth, cowardly dismissing good soldiers so that they can replace them with toadies.

We have raised several generations of business leaders who are monetary cowards, otherwise known as insatiable gluttons. They don't even understand the concept of earning a real living, rather they believe that because of their position – their privileged state – they are owed unconscionably large wealth. They gleefully steal from the average Joe, reward themselves, beg the government to fix any mistakes they make, and are unwilling to submit themselves to the slightest criticism. They hide behind once clear and now vague economic concepts like “free trade” and “open markets” to defy all censure, and use these shields to sluice off the nation's treasure. They expect to be rewarded for being special. Any attempt to reduce their rapacious appetites is derided as socialist, or communist, or

especially un-American, and at the best fiscally naive. When faced with their misfeasance, they cower behind claims of proprietary rights and business privacy; “fairness” (their definition of the word, not mine) and “the American way of business”. They demand all of the privileges of the citizenry except accountability. Cowards all.

Religious leaders who gain political power through the subversion of public institutions, particularly the military establishment, are cowards of the soul. They no longer stand and say that their spiritual argument is so strong, so full of apparent truth, that they can freely persuade you to it. Rather they back-door their way into public organizations, plant their partisan zealots, and then claim ownership of the institution. Also, where they once knew that the blurring of the separation of church and state would hurt their religious freedom, they now use their planted surrogates to confound the division, spouting quasi-moral political arguments that would remove the barriers forever. They cringe behind the façade of their churches so that they can demand a special and unassailable voice, and they incidentally raise a lot of money to pursue their anti-constitutional ends. Their greed is likewise insatiable and it is greed for power, not just money – power over your life and your freedom of thought.

The press – the fourth estate – a group who has specific protection in the first amendment – kow-tow before the politicians and the business moguls. They won’t ask the hard questions because they might lose “access”, so they become the stenographers for the privileged. In their cowardice they have given away the protection the founders believed they must have, and they have done it for career and greed.

These used-to-be-journalists have become the tools of the rulers and the purveyors of “news-as-entertainment” journalism. One of my local TV stations gives us, once a day, “80 Seconds Around the World” as if it were adequate coverage of the pain and agony that is going on in the world, and they use at least 20 seconds of that time to show you a cute puppy, or a kid on water slide. TV journalism at its best, I fear. My newspaper this Sunday had almost no coverage of the war, but from page two on there were plenty of ads for Rolex and Ulysse Nardin watches, Tiffany jewelry, Lexuses and vacation homes, breast and penile implants, and feel-good seminars.

So we have a new “Golden Age” full of money and power hogs who hide behind their position and our ignorance and inaction to take over our world.

Where does this leave us – the un-privileged, the un-powerful, the ordinary schlumps who serve our country, pay our taxes, and try to raise our kids to be good citizens? Particularly, where does that leave us veterans?

Sadly we are fast becoming cowards too. We no longer demand accountability of our public servants. We no longer say, like our founders, that huge armies and grossly excessive wealth are the enemies of democracy. Instead, we cower behind a veil of ignorance. We have lost our curiosity, we have lost our conviction, and we have lost our will to demand of the privileged that they deny that privilege and return the nation to us – the rightful owners.

Oh we make speeches from time to time – before groups or at the end of the bar – saying that we are tough and brave and demand a response to our needs. We invariably go home, sleep it off, and forget about it. We shout about injustice on the rare occasion that it is reported, and forget about it tomorrow. We have adopted the attitude that we cannot affect or really improve our lives, thus we will do

nothing, except of course shop, and entertain ourselves and our kids, and pretend that life is good because we have a big house, or a grand car, or lots of toys.

And then occasionally we try to make a point. We veterans try to demand justice for those who have gone beyond the call and have served their nation without reservation. But we and our families and our friends have lost our voice. We have become the cowards that we hate. We don’t shake the halls of Congress – we plead, and when we are ignored – and we are definitely ignored – we go home and lick our wounds and then say, Oh, well.” Most of us don’t even help our fellow veterans who are hurting – we beg the cowards at the top to let a little of the good stuff trickle down. Since we don’t feed their greed, they don’t even consider us as part of their real constituency. (Call your representative and try to get face time – you won’t get it but the lobbyist will, and the politico-pastor will, and the newsie who is willing to publish another puff-piece will, and the large contributor definitely will). I understand that it is difficult for a representative to make time for all of the 690,000 of their district constituents, but if they are short of time, why is it given to those people and not to us? Why are their concerns and needs met and not ours?

We Americans have substituted mock bravery for real bravery. We can roar through town with our flags on our pickup trucks, but we can’t go to the recruiting station, and we certainly don’t bang on the closed doors of Congress. We can put those god-awful yellow ribbons on our SUVs so that we can look patriotic travelling to Wal-Mart or Neiman-Marcus. (Full disclosure – I have both a pickup and an SUV – I don’t shop at Wal-Mart or Neiman-Marcus) We can hang a flag in front of our house and then turn away the recruiters who want to speak to our kids saying, “We’re not that sort of people.” (This really happened).

Worst of all, for over six years we brave Americans have cowered waiting to be struck by another terrorist attack – frightened of maybe 100,000 disorganized criminals – out of a population of 6.7 billion - dressed in rags, who are successful only because we believe that they can bring down this republic which has the mightiest armed force the world has ever seen.

We tremble – they win!

I don’t remember this kind of attitude on 7 December 1941 (yes I remember that date). We lined up to take on what was then the mightiest armed force in the world – a real “Axis of Evil”. We were poorly armed, poorly trained, and had just lost most of our fleet, but we stood up. We didn’t have that kind of attitude during the Berlin Airlift or the Cuban Missile crisis when honest-to-God real nuclear war was a distinct possibility.

I do remember when the world thought well of us, not because we were selfish and bullies, but because we were kind victors and helpful friends. Some say that we should stand on our own and not care what the world thinks of us. Well I not-so-humbly disagree. All men are my brothers and I value their good thoughts, because that means that I may be doing something greater than I know.

I seldom long for the good old days, because they were only old days, and really not very good. But when it comes to courage, our fathers had more than we did – and that is one bloody shame! [Ed.]

“Moral excellence comes about as a result of habit. We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.”
Aristotle

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program <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 <http://www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/>

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

Membership is open, free, and very worthwhile! Get your fellow veterans, and veterans' family members to join vuft! We are beginning to be heard, and we need you to help us get the message out. If each of us would bring in one new member every month, what an impact we could have!

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE!

Please check the website at www.vuft.org. We have revised it and are regularly adding useful references.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

THE FIGHT IS ON! The [law suit](#) that we have filed along with Veterans for Common Sense against the Veterans' Administration proceeds slowly. There are new [documents](#) on the lawsuit concerning disclosures on our website.

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

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on [our website](#) "[Donate](#)" page. Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method. If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at rhandy@vuft.org or the Vice Chair at scook@vuft.org. Watch for details at www.vuft.org

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS will be meeting on 26 January 2008 at the chair's home in Santa Barbara, CA – 1100 - 1530.

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

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

Extract of a letter from a member commenting on Judge Conti's ruling in our class action suit and the government's argument that, "it was required to provide only as much care as the VA's budget allowed in a given year."

... When someone is injured by hot coffee at McDonalds, or is traumatized by a finger in their chili beans, they get what the judge and the court find just as Just Compensation. It's a debt, and the party at fault doesn't get to use their budget as a reason for not paying. When a federal contractor stops the project to claim that a typo in the specifications caused him extra work, the government negotiates with him and pays him off rather than have their mistake argued in the U.S. Claims Court. "It's wasn't in our budget" is not a valid argument in the U.S. Claims Court, or in any U.S. court of law, because Just Compensation is a *mandate* of our Constitution. Equal Protection is another mandate that guaranties the veteran/citizen the same process of claiming damages as customers and contractors. Compensations aren't benefits. Compensations aren't budget items. The law requires mandatory funding of Just Compensation debts. ...

Semper Fi – Norm (Cegelnik)

From another member in response to Judge Conti's ruling:

Thank you for all you and Veterans United for Truth do to advocate for Veterans. Please, if you can, promote a web site I started: <http://www.VeteransInRecovery.org> and encourage your clients to sign a petition for Homeless Veterans at <http://apps.facebook.com/petitions/view?pid=866489424>

Wilfred Marks

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

SENATORS CALL FOR INCREASE IN VETERANS' MILEAGE BENEFIT

Associated Press - January 21, 2008

CODY Wyo. (AP) - Seven U.S. senators are asking the Department of Veterans Affairs to increase the amount it pays disabled veterans who travel to Veterans Administration hospitals to receive care. Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., announced the effort to get an increase of 17.5 cents per mile in the reimbursement rate. <More at: http://www.kpvi.com/Global/story.asp?S=7751153&nav=menu546_2>

DÉJÀ VU: WOUNDED WARRIOR PASSES HOUSE AGAIN, GOES TO SENATE

Jan 17, 2008

House Passes \$696 Billion Defense Bill

January 16, 2008, Washington, DC (AP) - The House on Wednesday passed a new defense policy bill that includes a pay raise for troops. (The new bill is HR 4986. It was formerly S 1606 and HR 1585.) President Bush had rejected an earlier version of the legislation because he said it would expose the Iraqi government to expensive lawsuits. The new bill, which passed 369-46, would let Bush grant Iraq immunity under the provision, which otherwise guarantees that U.S. victims of state-sponsored abuse can sue foreign governments in court. Iraqi officials objected to the measure because they said it would have subjected Baghdad to high-dollar payouts in damages from the Saddam Hussein era.

The administration now supports the bill, said White House spokesman Tony Fratto.

<More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/articleid/9153>>

BILL WOULD CLEAR VETS' ESTATES OF VA DEBT

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Jan 22, 2008

A bill that would block the Department of Veterans Affairs from trying to collect money from the estates of service members who die in combat was introduced Tuesday by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas. Her bill, S 2536, applies only to debts to the VA, and not to money owed to private-sector creditors or other federal agencies, such as the Internal Revenue Service. <More at: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/01/military_veteransestates_080122w/>

RETREAT – NEWS

FIVE BRIGADES SHOULD BE HOME BY JULY, GATES SAYS

Fred W. Baker III - American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 17, 2008 – Five brigade combat teams, equal to 2007's troop surge, should be home by July, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said today.

"All the evidence available to me now suggests that we will be able to complete the drawdown of the five brigade combat teams ... by the end of July," the secretary said at a briefing with the Pentagon press corps.

The first brigade has already left the country, but no specific timeline has been released for the redeployment of the others. Beyond that, additional troop movements will be based on assessments by military commanders in March and, ultimately, the president's decision, Gates said. <More at: <http://www.defenseink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=48699>>

IRAQI SEES NEED FOR U.S. MILITARY UNTIL 2018

Jan 14, 2008

Iraq's defense minister said on Monday his country would need foreign military help to defend its borders for another 10 years and would not be able to maintain internal security until 2012.

Abdul Qadir's remarks, in an interview with The New York Times posted on the newspaper's Internet site, could become an issue in the U.S. presidential campaign.

"According to our calculations and our timelines, we think that from the first quarter of 2009 until 2012 we will be able to take full control of the internal affairs of the country," Qadir said. <More at: http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20080115/ts_nm/iraq_usa_times_dc_1>

JCS CHAIRMAN WANTS GITMO SHUT DOWN

Associated Press - January 14, 2008

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba - The chief of the U.S. military said he favors closing the prison here as soon as possible because he believes negative publicity worldwide about treatment of terrorist suspects has been "pretty damaging" to the image of the United States.

"I'd like to see it shut down," Adm. Mike Mullen said Jan. 13 in an interview with three reporters who toured the detention center with him on his first visit since becoming chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff last October.

His visit came two days after the sixth anniversary of the prison's opening in January 2002. He stressed that a closure decision was not his to make and that he understands there are numerous complex legal questions the administration believes would have to be settled first, such as where to move prisoners. <More at: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/14/terror/main3708299.shtml>>

THIS FOR A FORCE THAT HAS NOT FOUGHT A CAPITAL-SHIP OPPOSED SEA ENGAGEMENT IN 64 YEARS (BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF - OCTOBER 1944)

NAVY MULLS REVIVING THE FOURTH FLEET

Miami Herald - January 15, 2008

MIAMI - The Navy is considering restoring the Fourth Fleet in the Atlantic Ocean, a bureaucratic change that would raise the prominence of Pentagon maritime activities in Latin America and Caribbean.

Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made the disclosure during a visit to the Southern Command on Monday - calling it "a great idea" that "as far as I know is moving forward."

The move would bring no new vessels to the region but would put Southcom on par administratively with other Pentagon outposts that have large budgets and bigger muscle. For example, the Central Command operates the Fifth Fleet in the Middle East. It would also restore an institution that sent U.S. Navy warships into southern waters in search of Nazi U-boats. The Navy created the Fourth Fleet in 1943 to hunt submarines in the South Atlantic during World War II. It was disbanded seven years later with naval operations in the region run from Norfolk, Va. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.160064.00.html>>

AND THIS FOR A FORCE THAT HAS NOT FOUGHT A FULL-BLOWN OPPOSED AIR ENGAGEMENT IN 35 YEARS (LINEBACKER II ~ DECEMBER '72)

GENERAL WANTS F-22 BUYS SPEEDED UP

Fort Worth Star-Telegram - January 14, 2008

WASHINGTON - Accelerating production of Lockheed Martin's F-22 Raptor is emerging as a possible option as the Air Force determines how to maintain its overall force structure with the grounding of older-model F-15 fighter jets, a top Air Force general says.

... Shackelford restated the Air Force's goal of buying 381 Raptors, which he said is the minimum needed to confront a proliferation of advanced surface-to-air missiles and the emergence of new-generation fighters in Russia and China.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0.13319.159906.00.html>>

BUT THIS FOR THE FORCE (WITH THE MARINES) THAT IS FIGHTING TODAY'S BATTLES

CASEY: 4 YEARS TO PUT ARMY 'BACK IN BALANCE'

01/16/2008

The chief of staff of the Army told 400 attendees at the Association of the United States Army's Institute of Land Warfare breakfast that it would take about four years to put the Army back in balance.

Speaking Jan. 16 in suburban Washington, Gen. George W. Casey Jr. said, "I wrestle hard to describe the state of the Army [and settled on] out of balance."

He said that was caused by the force "being so consumed by the current" pace and nature of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and that has put it "at a point where we have difficulty sustaining the All Volunteer Force."

In answer to a question, he said the Army would need units to be home for at least 18 months to train for full spectrum operations.

They are now back for about a year before re-deploying and primarily training in counterinsurgency warfare. He said he has changed his mind from his time as a division commander in the late 1990s saying: "If we could do conventional warfare, we could do anything. I don't believe that now." <More at: <http://www.ausa.org/webpub/DeptHome.nsf/byid/RBOH-7AWLV2>>

STUDENT VETERANS SEEK NATIONAL VOICE

Julian Pecquet - Staff Writer - Jan 18, 2008

At university campuses across the country, student veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are forming a new generation of activists.

And like their predecessors from World War II and Vietnam, they're getting organized nationally to fight for their rights.

"The goal is to have a national voice," said Glen Hollowell, a former Marine with two tours in Iraq who is now president of Florida State University's Collegiate Veterans Association. "We could get a lot more accomplished with us all working together"

<More at: <http://www.tallahassee.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080118/BREAKINGNEWS/80118021>>

THE LESSONS OF ONE WAR TRANSLATE EASILY TO THE NEXT IS THIS THE KEY TO IRAQI ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY?

OPIUM FIELDS SPREAD ACROSS IRAQ AS FARMERS TRY TO MAKE ENDS MEET

Patrick Cockburn 9 January 2008 12:02

The cultivation of opium poppies whose product is turned into heroin is spreading rapidly across Iraq as farmers find they can no longer make a living through growing traditional crops.

Afghanis with experience in planting poppies have been helping farmers switch to producing opium in fertile parts of Diyala province, once famous for its oranges and pomegranates, north- east of Baghdad. More at:

http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article3345186.ece>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
2/14	1100 - 1400	Crowne Plaza 4100 PRESIDENTIAL BLVD Philadelphia, PA	Career Fair		215-477-0200
2/15-2/17		Phoenix AZ	Standdown	Susan Marcell	602-379-7132
2/16/08	1300	Vandenberg AFB, CA Pacific Coast Club	Luncheon Honoring Art Hicks Tuskegee Airman	VUFT, Inc. Bob Handy, Chair	805-962-9082 805-455-5259
2/17/08		Phoenix, AZ	Stand down	Susan Marcell	602-379-7132
2/19	1100 - 1400	Radisson Martinique On Broadway Hotel 49 WEST 32ND STREET New York, NY	Career Fair		212-736-3800
3/16-3/18		National Labor College 10000 New Hampshire Ave. Silver Spring, MD	Winter Soldier II	IVAW	773-276-4189

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

VA GETS \$3.7 BILLION TO HIRE MORE CASEWORKERS

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Jan 18, 2008 EST

President Bush signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 on Thursday, handing over an extra \$3.7 billion to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Bush had to sign the act by Jan. 18, or VA would have lost the promised extra funding, which will be used to hire and train people to process the backlog of more than 600,000 benefits claims, said Dave Autry, spokesman for Disabled American Veterans. Some of the money also will go toward medical research for conditions such as traumatic brain injuries.

<More at: http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2008/01/military_vafunding_080117w/>

ARMY'S RECALL OF 48-YEAR-OLD IS REVEALING

Jan 15, 2008

Imagine being in his shoes. You're a 48-year-old teacher at Mercyhurst College's Institute for Intelligence Study. You have a loving family, a comfortable life and then, wham! A letter from the U.S. Army arrives in your mailbox, calling you back into service -- 15 years after you retired as an Army major. Mulligan made some calls to make sure it wasn't a mistake. It wasn't. He'll report to Fort Benning, Ga., on Sunday to prepare for active military service in Iraq.

"The Army must be stretched pretty thin," Mulligan said.

<More at: <http://goerie.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080115/OPINION01/801150344/-1/OPINION>>

REPORT: TROOPS TO WAR DESPITE BROKEN LEG, TORN ROTATOR CUFFS

The Associated Press - Jan 17, 2008

DENVER — Soldiers who were medically unfit or considered borderline have been sent to the Middle East to meet Army goals for "deployable strength," The Denver Post reported Thursday. Quoting internal Army e-mails and a Fort Carson soldier, the newspaper said that more than 50 troops were deployed to Kuwait en route to Iraq while they were still getting medical treatment for various conditions. At least two have been sent home. <More at: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/01/ap_sicktroops_080117/>

DEAD SOLDIER'S DOCTOR IS FIRED

Laura Ungar - The Courier-Journal - January 18, 2008

A psychiatrist who treated Sgt. Gerald Cassidy, the wounded Iraq veteran from Indiana found dead in his Fort Knox barracks, has been "relieved of his duties," a spokesman for U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh said yesterday. Bayh press secretary Jonathan Swain identified the psychiatrist as Dr. William Kearney.

The civilian doctor, contracted by the Army, is the fourth person to face job action in connection with the Sept. 21 death. Three soldiers in Cassidy's chain of command have already lost their posts.

... Although the Army is still investigating the death and its cause, preliminary reports show that the brain-injured National Guardsman may have been unconscious for days and dead for hours before someone checked on him.

<More at: <http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080118/NEWS01/801180431/1008/NEWS01>>

TASK FORCE SEEKS BRAIN INJURY STUDIES

Associated Press - January 18, 2008

WASHINGTON - As many as 20 percent of U.S. combat troops who fought in Iraq or Afghanistan leave with signs they may have had a concussion, and some do not realize they need treatment, Army officials said Thursday. Concussion is a common term for mild traumatic brain injury, or TBI. While the Army has a handle on treating more severe brain injuries, it is "challenged to understand, diagnose and treat military personnel who suffer with mild TBI," said Brig. Gen. Donald Bradshaw, chairman of a task force on traumatic brain injury created by the Army surgeon general. <More at:

<http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5iMHMLZiNoA7oEGGXIF0oi1TifwQD8U7T0S01>>

SENATORS URGE SPECIAL REVIEW BOARD FOR DISCHARGED MILITARY PERSONNEL

December 21, 2007 -- WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senators Kit Bond (R-MO), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Barack Obama (D-IL), and Claire McCaskill (D-MO) are urging President Bush to create a Special Review Board for discharged troops who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and to place a moratorium on the military's use of Personality Disorder Discharges.

"Our government has a lifelong responsibility to care for the brave volunteers who have served our nation honorably in combat, unfortunately, the government is failing some of our wounded warriors," said Bond. "It is critical that the government starts treating all of our troops' battle wounds -- physical and mental, visible and invisible." "It belittles the sacrifice of our men and women in uniform when you punish--instead of treat--those with combat injuries," said Boxer. "When our brave service members are injured in combat, we cannot deny them benefits, blame their conditions on a pre-existing disorder, or refuse them the care and support they deserve." <More at: http://www.allamericanpatriots.com/48741075_senators-urge-special-review-board-discharged-mili>

HOMELESS ON THE HOME FRONT

Erin McClam - Associated Press - January 19, 2008

... As the war in Afghanistan plods on in its seventh year, and the war in Iraq in its fifth, a new cadre of homeless veterans is taking shape. And with it come the questions: How is it that a nation that became so familiar with the archetypal homeless, combat-addled Vietnam veteran is now watching as more homeless veterans turn up from new wars?

What lessons have we not learned? Who is failing these people? Or is homelessness an unavoidable byproduct of war, of young men and women who devote themselves to serving their country and then see things no man or woman should?

<More at: <http://reporternews.com/news/2008/jan/19/homeless-home-front/>>

MD. GOES 'BEGGING' FOR AID FOR GUARD

Baltimore Sun - January 15, 2008

More than a thousand Maryland National Guard troops are due to return from Iraq this spring, but essential programs to help ease them into civilian life are underfunded and in disarray, according to Maryland National Guard and U.S. officials.

The Pentagon has resisted funding efforts by Maryland and other states that have sought to avoid problems experienced by previously returning National Guard Soldiers, including nervousness, inappropriate anger, sleeplessness, family disputes, marital problems and alcohol abuse.

That leaves the Maryland Guard scrambling to find the volunteers, donations and its own patchwork funding to help reorient Soldiers from the dangerous, high-adrenalin battlefield to the joys and stresses of home, family and schools or civilian jobs.

<More at: <http://www.alipac.us/ftopic-98847.html>>

CHIEF OF VETERANS CHARITIES GRILLED ON GROUPS' SPENDING

Philip Rucker - Washington Post Staff Writer - January 18, 2008; A01

A congressional investigation yesterday uncovered new allegations of questionable spending practices at two veterans charities, including one that paid retired Army Gen. Tommy Franks \$100,000 to appear in its solicitation letters using money the nonprofit raised to help soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

At a raucous, three-hour hearing yesterday, House members questioned California entrepreneur Roger Chapin about his management of two charities. One charity, Help Hospitalized Veterans, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations that were to help wounded soldiers on personal expenses for Chapin, executive director Mike Lynch and Richard A. Viguerie, to whom the charity has awarded millions of dollars in fundraising-consulting contracts, the hearing found.

The expenses included at least \$340,000 in meals, hotels and entertainment; a \$135,000 loan to Lynch for a divorce settlement with his former wife; a \$17,000 country club membership; three airplane tickets to Hawaii; and a \$1 million loan to Viguerie for a start-up initiative at his firm, several members of the committee said.

The second charity, the Coalition to Support America's Heroes, used Franks in its solicitation letters, the House Committee on Government Oversight and Reform found.

Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.), chairman of the committee, said Help Hospitalized Veterans raised more than \$168 million from 2004 to 2006. The charity spent a quarter of those donations on the veterans, with the rest going to direct-mail fundraising, salaries and other expenses, Waxman said.

Republicans and Democrats voiced outrage over what Waxman called "an intolerable fraud."

"Most of the millions they receive never reach veterans or their families," Waxman said. "Instead, the groups waste those contributions on bloated overhead costs and self-enrichment."

<More at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/17/AR2008011703620.html>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF JANUARY 23, 2008

This week the Army and Navy announced a decrease, while the Air Force and Marine Corps announced an increase. The Coast Guard number remained the same. The net collective result is 110 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. The total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 73,558; Navy Reserve, 5,043; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,118; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,677; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 333. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been mobilized to 94,729, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jan2008/d20080123ngr.pdf>.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE THURSDAY 24 JANUARY 2008

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (1,772 DAYS)

KILLED US	3,931
WOUNDED US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 1/10]	28,870
OTHER US CASUALTIES [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 1/10]	≥30,537
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [LAST DoD UPDATE 1/10]	135
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	4
KILLED UK	174
KILLED OTHER COALITION	133
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [LAST DoD UPDATE 6/30]	1,001
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 88,048
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400,000+
IRAQ REFUGEES INTERNAL/EXTERNAL [12/9/27]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,301 DAYS)

KILLED US (1/10)	480
*OTHER CASUALTIES US [EST. LAST DoD UPDATE 10/2007]	7,720
KILLED COALITION (6/2007)	281
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,472
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	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE [1/10]	\$488,527,615,392

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

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

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

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

THE WORLD'S TOP 10 MILITARY SPENDERS AND THE APPROXIMATE AMOUNTS EACH COUNTRY CURRENTLY BUDGETS FOR ITS MILITARY ARE:

1. United States (FY08 budget), \$623 billion
2. China (2004), \$65 billion
3. Russia, \$50 billion
4. France (2005), \$45 billion
5. Japan (2007), \$41.75 billion
6. Germany (2003), \$35.1 billion
7. Italy (2003), \$28.2 billion
8. South Korea (2003), \$21.1 billion
9. India (2005 est.), \$19 billion
10. Saudi Arabia (2005 est.), \$18 billion

World total military expenditures (2004 est.), \$1,100 billion - http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174884/chalmers_johnson_how_to_sink_america

HOW DOES THEN COMPARE TO NOW?

What millions of American men did

Just under 27 million American men were eligible for military service between 1964 and 1973.

Of that number 8.4 million served on active duty.

Another 2 million served in the National Guard or military reserves.

About 15.4 million got deferments, most for education, a smaller number for physical, mental or family hardships.

2.1 million actually saw service in Vietnam.

570,000 illegally resisted the draft.

58,152 were killed; 153,303 were seriously wounded

Sources: National Archives, Reader's Companion to American History

And the women?

Approximately 6,500 women served – 9 military women were killed

AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO SPEND THE MONEY

This is an update to an observation made about 18 months ago.

Population of Iraq 28,000,000

Cost of Iraq War to date \$490,000,000,000

Cost to date per Iraqi \$17,400

Average Iraqi family size 5

QUESTION: What might the outcome have been had we offered the head of each Iraqi family \$87,000 in March of 2003 on the condition that he spend it only in Iraq and that they all depose Saddam Hussein?

Same cost – many fewer deaths – no US and allied deaths

ADD-ON ~

CHECK OUT WHAT THE CANDIDATES HAVE TO SAY ON OUR MAJOR ISSUES
[CLICK ON THE "O"]

Candidate	War in Iraq	Service Members and Families	Veterans
Clinton	<u>O</u>	-	<u>O</u>
Edwards	<u>O</u>		<u>O</u>
Giuliani	<u>O</u>		<u>O</u>
Gravel	<u>O</u>	-	<u>O</u>
Huckabee	<u>O</u>	-	<u>O</u>
Keyes	<u>O</u>	-	-
Kucinich	<u>O</u>		<u>O</u>
McCain	<u>O</u>		<u>O</u>
Obama	<u>O</u>		<u>O</u>
Paul	<u>O</u>	-	<u>O</u>
Romney	<u>O</u>	-	-

NOTE: Kucinich announced withdrawal at press time

RULE CHANGE WIDENS ACCESS TO SPACE-A TRAVEL

Karen Jowers - Staff writer - Jan 21, 2008

A permanent policy change will allow family members of deployed military members to travel anywhere "Space-A," or space available, on military flights without their sponsors under certain conditions.

<More at: http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2008/01/military_spaceatravel_080118/>

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