

SOUND OFF!



VOL. I, NO 12

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 JANUARY 2006

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

With Congress out of session since the last issue, and with most of the bureaucrats on holiday, they have not been able to keep up their tempo of mischief, so this issue may be a little shorter than usual on regular news, but the issues articles keep pouring in.

KNIGHTS WITHOUT ARMOR

The main issue that has surfaced (again) during this two weeks is the woeful lack of body armor in the deployed forces. A number of our articles deal with that problem, which is one of the key elements of our “Mission Statement”

“... if sent they are fully trained and provisioned with the best possible equipment;”

There is something wrong when generals are being provided with the most modern body armor and privates are not. Aren't officers supposed to go to the end of the line in combat? In my Army they always were.

For most of us, this may seem like an academic issue. After all, during World War II and the Korean War ground troops didn't have “body armor”. We had flak vests during the Viet Nam War, and soon found out that they were of marginal help, but they were something.

Only recently have we come to understand how poorly they protected us. Which unfailingly leads to the question, why are the Viet Nam era flak vests still being issued to National Guard and Reserve troops?

The “Interceptor” OTV (Outer Tactical Vest, the current standard issue for the active forces, costs \$1,100. The

Pinnacle Armor “Dragon Skin” costs \$5,000. Most of the injuries discussed in the articles in **TATTOO** were to troops wearing either the Interceptor vest or, to our shame, the Viet Nam era vest.

Currently the Air Force is building the F-22 “Raptor” under reduced production constraints which has raised the per-unit price from \$98M to \$200M each. Since the F-22 is designed to defeat a threat that doesn't really exist, it would seem to be all right if we canceled just four out of the production and equipped all 160,000 troops in Iraq with the Dragon Skin vest. Kind of a no-brainer, don't you think? An order that large would probably reduce the per-unit price of each to a level that we could protect all other deployed combat troops around the world for the same price.

Cancel 10 Raptors and we could also replace all of the unarmored vehicles with vehicles incorporating the most advanced chassis armor.

This decision should have nothing to do with current budgets, and who's program is favored. It should be solely about bringing home everyone that we can, safely.

What's the difficulty? Is this too tough a concept for our Defense Department leaders? If so, then they don't deserve their leadership positions.

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS

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.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

OUTREACH: New possibilities for a chapter in Hawaii. If this one makes it we only have 46 to go. If you are interested in starting a chapter in your state, please contact the chair bhandy@vuft.org.

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If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on our website "Join" page. You can also buy our pins using the same method.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

No mail this time

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

Congress and the state legislatures have been home celebrating the holidays and lining up more money to keep themselves in office. Nothing significant to report here.

We are watching for our California Legislation to come out of the audit committee. More news later.

RETREAT - NEWS

THE ARMY, FACED WITH ITS LIMITS

Fred Kaplan - January 1, 2006

ONE million men and women serve in the United States Army, so why is it proving nearly impossible to keep a mere 150,000 of them in Iraq? The Pentagon expects to face many Iraq-type conflicts in the coming years, wars that involve battling insurgents and restoring stability. As a result, a debate is beginning to churn in defense policy circles: Should the government enlarge the military so it can more easily fight these wars? Or should the government alter its policies, so as not to fight such wars as often, at least not alone?...Lawrence Korb, who was assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve affairs in the Reagan administration, states the issue baldly: "We cannot fight a long, sustained war without a larger ground force." He defines a "long war" as lasting two years or more. The Iraq war has gone on now for nearly three.

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/01/weekinreview/01kaplan.html>>

[SO WHY ARE THEY DOING THIS? IS IT BECAUSE 60% DON'T SHOW UP WHEN CALLED?]

ARMY TO CULL 12,000 OFFICERS OUT OF IRR

Stars and Stripes | Lisa Burgess | December 21, 2005

ARLINGTON, Va. — The Army is taking more than 12,000 Individual Ready Reserve officers off the rolls and out of the running for activation, unless they actively sign up to retain their commissions and stay available for war duty. The order is a reversal of a long-standing procedure that keeps Army officers in the IRR automatically unless they resign their commission, according to Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, a spokesman for the Army's personnel office.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,83497,00.html>>

[NO HELP HERE!]

U.S. ALLIES REDUCING TROOP LEVELS IN IRAQ

Associated Press | December 27, 2005

WARSAW, Poland - The U.S. coalition in Iraq saw its size dwindle Tuesday as Ukraine and Bulgaria said all of their troops had left the country while Poland said it would remain, but reduce its number of troops by 600 next year.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,83903,00.html>>

[SOME HELP HERE, THOUGH!]

AIR FORCE'S ROLE CHANGING IN IRAQ

Associated Press | January 03, 2006

AN AIR BASE IN KUWAIT - U.S. Airmen are increasingly on the ground in Iraq, driving in convoys and even working with detainees - a shift in the Air Force's historic mission that military officials call necessary to bolster the strapped Army. The main aerial hub for the war in Iraq has 1,500 airmen doing convoy operations in Iraq and 1,000 working with detainees, training Iraqis and performing other activities not usually associated with the Air Force, said Col. Tim Hale, commander of the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,84287,00.html>>

[BUT PRECIOUS LITTLE HELP HERE!]

CHIEFS EXAMINE COMBAT TOUR LENGTHS

American Forces Press Service | January 05, 2006

WASHINGTON, The service chiefs continue to examine how long Servicemembers should serve in Iraq, but for now they are satisfied the tour lengths are about right, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said Jan. 3. Marine Gen. Peter Pace, who was flying back after leading a weeklong USO trip to the U.S. Central Command area of operations, said the service chiefs have examined the policy carefully over the past two years. Iraq tour lengths are different among the services. Airmen generally are deployed for four months. Marines and sailors serve about seven months. Soldiers generally spend a year with "boots on -the ground." Pace said he hadn't heard complaints about tour lengths from the troops, but he had been apprised of concerns. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,84527,00.html>>

PENTAGON REJECTED BREMER'S CALL FOR TROOPS

Associated Press | January 09, 2006

WASHINGTON - Pentagon officials acknowledged Monday that Paul Bremer, the senior U.S. official in Iraq during the first year of the war, told Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld in May 2004 that a far larger number of U.S. troops were needed to effectively fight the insurgency but his advice was rejected. Larry Di Rita, a Rumsfeld spokesman, told reporters that Bremer made the recommendation in a memorandum and that it was the only time during his 13 months as head of the U.S. civilian occupation authority in Baghdad that he offered advice on troop levels. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,84897,00.html>>

ARMY, NAVY HIT WITH LAST-MINUTE CUTS [BUT NOT TO BUY DRAGON SKINS]

InsideDefense.com NewsStand | Daniel G. Dupont and Jason Sherman | January 04, 2006

The Pentagon handed down 11th-hour budget cuts after Christmas last week, slashing \$4 billion from the Army and Navy and plowing \$3.5 billion into a wide range of new initiatives, many of which are designed to support combatant commanders. Tina Jonas, the Pentagon's comptroller, on Dec. 28 signed program budget decision 723, which makes small adjustments to hundreds of programs between fiscal years 2006 and 2011, as well as a few large moves including an increase of about \$2.5 billion for fuel costs. <More at: <http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,84455,00.html>>

CORPS PAYS \$100K FOR RETOOLED JEEP [THIS ISN'T FOR DRAGON SKINS EITHER]

USA Today | December 29, 2005

WASHINGTON - The Marine Corps is paying \$100,000 apiece for a revamped Vietnam-era jeep as part of its program to outfit the hybrid airplane-helicopter V-22 Osprey, Pentagon records show. That's seven times what a deluxe commercial version of the vehicle costs. It's also three times what U.S. Export-Import Bank records show the Dominican Republic paid four years ago for a military version of the vehicle, called the Growler, a recycled version of the M151 jeep. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,84032,00.html>>

FOR VETERAN U.S. TROOPS, A NEW CHALLENGE IN IRAQ

Thanassis Cambanis - The Boston Globe - Jan 09, 2006

Captain John McLaughlin's company of U.S. combat veterans has returned to Iraq. His paratroopers have brought far fewer illusions this time around, exchanging unalloyed enthusiasm for the war in Iraq in the spring of 2003 for a mix of professionalism, resignation and cynicism. The enlisted men from the 101st Airborne Division now know much more about the country, confidently factoring in competing ethnic agendas as they navigate the claims of Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Shiites and Turkmens. Most dismiss the debate over the merits of the war as irrelevant, many of them saying they fight out of loyalty to the U.S. Army even if they think its mission in Iraq is unrealistic. Most profess no love for Iraq or its people. <More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/?page=article&id=6051>>

IRAQ WAR COULD COST US OVER \$2 TRILLION, SAYS NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING ECONOMIST

Jamie Wilson in Washington - January 7, 2006 - The Guardian

The real cost to the US of the Iraq war is likely to be between \$1 trillion and \$2 trillion (£1.1 trillion), up to 10 times more than previously thought, according to a report written by a Nobel prize-winning economist and a Harvard budget expert. The study, which expanded on traditional estimates by including such costs as lifetime disability and healthcare for troops injured in the conflict as well as the impact on the American economy, concluded that the US government is continuing to underestimate the cost of the war. <More at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1681078,00.html>>

SPENDING PRACTICES OF VETERANS CHARITIES VARY, ANALYSIS SHOWS

Alison Young - Knight Ridder Newspapers - Dec. 29, 2005

WASHINGTON - The pitches from AMVETS are practiced and smooth: Help America's veterans get treatment for their disabilities or monthly checks to compensate for their injuries. Give them the means to avoid homelessness. AMVETS tells potential donors that it's chartered by Congress, which creates the misleading impression that the U.S. government vouches for the organization and is overseeing it. AMVETS spent \$8.5 million in 2004, but according to its tax record only 22 percent of it went for programs that helped veterans, much less than the 60 to 65 percent that experts on philanthropy consider the minimum. <More at: <http://www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/13510354.htm>>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Purpose
4/20 - 23/06		Pleasanton/Camp Parks, CA	AUSA Spring Symposium	AUSA 6 th Region	Periodic Meeting
5/27-31/06	-	Washington DC	Legislative Action Rally	VUFT and others	Get their attention

Let us know about meetings and gatherings and we will advertise them

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

THIS IS THE ARTICLE TO READ – A LONG ONE – IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THE FULL STORY ABOUT “INTERCEPTOR” VS. “DRAGON SKIN” – sounds like a video game doesn't it, or a Schwarzenegger movie?]

IS AMERICA'S BEST GETTING AMERICA'S BEST

By Nathaniel R. Helms

It is good enough body armor that nine American generals in Afghanistan are wearing it in place of the standard "Interceptor OTV" armor issued to the troops they command. It offers such great protection that the U.S. Secret Service agents guarding the President of the United States wear it, and it is good enough that a civilian contractor in Iraq was shot eight times in the torso at close range and survived without even suffering soft tissue trauma. But the same armor, already in mass production, is apparently too expensive to provide to the men and women fighting and dying in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) every day.

The armor is called Dragon Skin and there is nothing particularly new about it. Dragon Skin has been made since 1997 by **Pinnacle Armor**, a small Fresno, California company with 30 employees. It is called Dragon Skin because it is manufactured from small overlapping armor plates that lay atop each other like ancient chain mail, explained Pinnacle spokesman Paul Chopra, "or like fish scales, but my boss didn't think it sounded too sexy calling it "Fish Skin."

Regardless of what it is called every military service, many federal police agencies, local police departments, and the U.S. Army's ballistic testing facility at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland have purchased small quantities of the unique armor. Among its owners and users it has a sterling reputation, numerous sources told *DefenseWatch*.

Outside the government parents, spouses and church groups who heard about its superior qualities through word-of-mouth are also purchasing the high-tech chain mail for their knights going in harm's way. Chopra said Pinnacle has privately sold hundreds of the armored vests and ancillary equipment to service members. Despite the well known qualities of Dragon Skin, in 1999 the Department of Defense inexplicably chose the Interceptor armor for the Armed Forces two year after Dragon Skin became available on the open market. <More at :

Part 1 - <http://www.sftt.org/main.cfm?actionId=globalShowStaticContent&screenKey=cmpArchives&archives=defense&htmlId=4009&HtmlCategoryId=30>

Part 2 - <http://www.sftt.org/main.cfm?actionId=globalShowStaticContent&screenKey=cmpArchives&archives=defense&htmlId=4193&HtmlCategoryId=30>

Part 3 - <http://www.sftt.org/main.cfm?actionId=globalShowStaticContent&screenKey=cmpArchives&archives=defense&htmlId=4252&HtmlCategoryId=30>

PENTAGON STUDY FAULTS US BODY ARMOR IN IRAQ DEATHS

Will Dunham Fri Jan 6, 2006

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Better body armor could have prevented or limited about 80 percent of fatal torso wounds suffered by Marines killed in Iraq, a report by U.S. military medical experts obtained on Friday said. The report, conducted for the Marine Corps by the Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner and not released to the public, examined the cases of Marines fatally wounded from the start of the war in March 2003 through June 2005, and found weaknesses in the torso protective gear. Bullets or shrapnel hit the Marines' shoulders, the sides of their torsos or other areas not fully covered by ceramic plates contained in the body armor in at least 74 of 93 fatal wounds examined in the study.

<More at: <http://go.reuters.com/newsArticle.jhtml?type=topNews&storyID=10780382&src=rss/topNews>>

EXTRA ARMOR COULD HAVE SAVED MANY LIVES, STUDY SHOWS

Michael Moss January 6, 2006

A secret Pentagon study has found that at least 80 percent of the marines who have been killed in Iraq from wounds to their upper body could have survived if they had extra body armor. That armor has been available since 2003 but until recently the Pentagon has largely declined to supply it to troops despite calls from the field for additional protection, according to military officials. The ceramic plates in vests currently worn by the majority of military personnel in Iraq cover only some of the chest and back. In at least 74 of the 93 fatal wounds that were analyzed in the Pentagon study of marines from March 2003 through June 2005, bullets and shrapnel struck the marines' shoulders, sides or areas of the torso where the plates do not reach. Thirty-one of the deadly wounds struck the chest or back so close to the plates that simply enlarging the existing shields "would have had the potential to alter the fatal outcome," according to the study, which was obtained by The New York Times.

<More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/06/politics/06cnd-armor.html>

[BUT, FOLKS, THIS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN!]

MOM BUYS BODY ARMOR FOR SON

United Press International | January 09, 2006

NEW YORK - A New York City mother says she spent about \$3,000 for body armor -- a Christmas gift for her son in the U.S. Marines who is deployed to Iraq.

Elaine Brower said her son, James Brower, gave her a list of items Marine buddies gave him, to buy body armor online.

James Brower had been deployed to Afghanistan, but when he returned he became a New York City police officer. Now, he has been redeployed as a reserve to Iraq and when his mom asked him what he wanted for Christmas, he said "body armor."

Elaine Brower made the purchases online for \$2,200. Then she spent \$800 for armor for her son's legs, the New York Daily News reported Sunday.

James Brower had assisted Marines and Soldiers who had lost limbs in Iraq at the New York City Marathon and they suggested leg armor -- especially to protect the femoral artery.

The son says everything fits and is comfortable and mom is set to make an Internal Revenue Service claim of up to \$1,100 -- thanks to a recently enacted: "Claim for Reimbursement and Payment Voucher for Privately Purchased Protective, Safety or Health Equipment Used in Combat." <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,84851,00.html>

AND ON OTHER ISSUES -----

DID THE VA REALLY ELIMINATE THOSE LONG WAITING LISTS FOR VETERANS' HEALTHCARE? NO!

Larry Scott - January 8, 2006

To hide a politically-dangerous situation, VA officials moved healthcare waiting lists from outside the system to inside – Veterans still wait months or years for necessary healthcare

It's an old political game. If you can't solve a problem, you hide it. But, this time, the game turned deadly.

For the first three years of the Bush administration pressure had been mounting on the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) as veterans tried to enroll for benefits in unprecedented numbers.

Vietnam-era veterans were experiencing late-onset diabetes and various cancers associated with exposure to Agent Orange. Older veterans who were on Medicare discovered it was less expensive to get their medications through the VA. Gulf War veterans complained of a myriad of symptoms that we know as Gulf War Syndrome. Many veterans were coming to grips with the devastating effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) brought on by their combat experiences. And, veterans caught in the stagnant economy in the early part of the new millennium found themselves unemployed or underemployed and without healthcare benefits.

The Problem

There were, literally, too many veterans for the VA's increasingly limited healthcare budget to handle. Waiting lists were created as veterans lined up at VA facilities seeking healthcare benefits. The waiting lists grew and by the middle of 2003 there were somewhere between 218,000 and 309,000 veterans waiting to enroll. (The number was in question. A VA Inspector General report found that the VA was keeping such sloppy records no one knew for sure.)

Major veterans' service organizations claimed that even the VA's high number was too low. Some well-educated guesses placed the number of veterans on the VA's waiting lists at close to 500,000.

<More at: http://www.opednews.com/articles/opedne_larry_sc_060108_did_the_va_really_el.htm>

GULF WAR SYNDROME STILL HAUNTING US TROOPS

By Mira Oberman - Chicago 2005-12-30

New study shows Gulf War syndrome persists in US troops after 10 years, is likely to strike them in Iraq.

'Gulf War syndrome', a debilitating multi-symptom affliction identified in many soldiers after the 1991 conflict in Kuwait, is likely to strike US troops fighting in Iraq, a new study shows. The syndrome, which proved hard to diagnose because it manifested itself in many different afflictions, remained widespread among US troops 10 years after the Gulf War ended, according to the study, lead-authored by Melvin Blanchard, assistant professor of medicine at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri. <More at: <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=15357>>

ONCE HOME, TROOPS FACE NEW BATTLE

By Vanessa Gregory and Claire Miller - Special to The Times - December 27, 2005 - © LA Times

Company A is back from Iraq, but the National Guard veterans find few resources to help them adjust to civilian life.

PETALUMA, Calif. — For the first time in two years, the soldiers of Company A are home for the holidays. But normal life still eludes the families of the California National Guard unit — based in this town north of San Francisco — that suffered one of the state's highest casualty rates in Iraq. There are sudden overwhelming anxiety attacks, financial hardships and strained marriages. "They bring home these empty shells of people, and that's what they are. They left the people they used to be behind," said Rene Gilmore, whose husband, Staff Sgt. Michael Gilmore, spent seven months on tense security patrols in Balad, Iraq, before he was wounded by a roadside bomb explosion.

<More and many other stories at: www.latimes.com/guardgoes>

VA HELP LINES FOUND TO REGULARLY PROVIDE WRONG INFORMATION

Chris Adams - Knight Ridder Newspapers - Dec. 30, 2005

WASHINGTON - A veteran who turns to the Department of Veterans Affairs for information about benefits might want to get a second opinion. According to the VA's own data, people who call the agency's regional offices for help and advice are more likely to receive completely wrong answers than completely right ones.

<More at: <http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/13518366.htm>>

SOME VETERANS FACE JOB CHALLENGES

Kecia Bal - The Tribune-Democrat - Dec 30, 2005

Though it has been more than two months since Army Reservist Timothy Treagner returned from Iraq, he still has to pause and ask his wife for their new address. "There are so many changes to get used to," he said. "You kind of have to look around and figure where you fit in."

His well-tending job was the last thing he wanted to worry about, but there was no getting around it. Treagner's bosses offered him the same type of position — only in another state. "They said it was the only way I could have my job back," Treagner said. Some soldiers are experiencing similar situations — returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to find their jobs have been taken or are rearranged. <More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/?Page=Article&ID=5973>>

CASUALTIES OF A WAR A WORLD AWAY

Jamie Wilson in Washington - October 26, 2005 - Guardian/UK

Elaina Morton is not listed as one of the 2,000 Americans now confirmed killed in Iraq since the start of the war, but she might as well be. In US military parlance the 23-year-old lab technician from Kansas would have been referred to as a "surviving spouse". But three months after her husband, Staff Sergeant Benjamin Morton, was killed by insurgents in Mosul, Elaina picked up a gun and shot herself.

The fact that the military did not issue a press release to announce the death of the former college student who loved her cat, Stinky, and enjoyed hiking, photography and camping, does not make her any less a casualty of the war. Hers is thought to be the first confirmed case of a war widow committing suicide, and as the US toll in Iraq yesterday hit the grim 2,000 landmark her death is proof of the immeasurable emotional toll that the conflict has put on families of servicemen and women.

<More at: <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/1026-28.htm>>

'MARLBORO MAN' IN IRAQ WAR PHOTO SUFFERS FROM PTSD

Editor & Publisher - Jan 04, 2006

So whatever happened to Lance Cpl. Blake Miller -- the U.S. Marine pictured as a kind of war-weary "Marlboro Man" in one of the most widely published iconic images of the Iraq war? The 2004 photograph by Luis Sinco of the Los Angeles Times showing Miller, face dirty under a helmet, a cigarette dangling from his lips, went around the world and back again, hitting front pages everywhere. Now Miller, of Jonancy, Ky., is a civilian "and is having trouble adjusting to civilian life," CBS News reports. Back home, he got married in June, but on duty during the Hurricane Katrina relief effort, Miller suffered from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and was granted an honorable discharge from the Marines in November. <More at: <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/0104-08.htm>



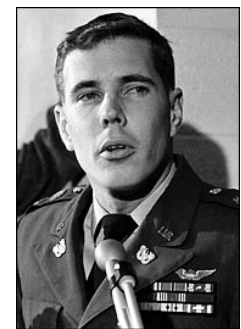
TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

[SOLDIERS LIKE HUGH THOMPSON MAKE DEFINING “HERO” EASY – ED.]

HUGH THOMPSON, 62, WHO SAVED CIVILIANS AT MY LAI, DIES

Richard Goldstein - January 7, 2006

Hugh Thompson, an Army helicopter pilot who rescued Vietnamese civilians during the My Lai massacre, reported the killings to his superior officers in a rage over what he had seen, testified at the inquiries and received a commendation from the Army three decades later, died yesterday in Alexandria, La. He was 62. The cause was cancer, Jay DeWorth, a spokesman for the Veterans Affairs Medical Center where Mr. Thompson died, told The Associated Press.



On March 16, 1968, Chief Warrant Officer Thompson and his two crewmen were flying on a reconnaissance mission over the South Vietnamese village of My Lai when they spotted the bodies of men, women and children strewn over the landscape.

Mr. Thompson landed twice in an effort to determine what was happening, finally coming to the realization that a massacre was taking place. The second time, he touched down near a bunker in which a group of about 10 civilians were being menaced by American troops. Using hand signals, Mr. Thompson persuaded the Vietnamese to come out while ordering his gunner and his crew chief to shoot any American soldiers who opened fire on the civilians. None did. Mr. Thompson radioed for a helicopter gunship to evacuate the group, and then his crew chief, Glenn Andreotta, pulled a boy from a nearby irrigation ditch, and their helicopter flew him to safety.

Mr. Thompson told of what he had seen when he returned to his base. "They said I was screaming quite loud," he told U.S. News & World Report in 2004. "I threatened never to fly again. I didn't want to be a part of that. It wasn't war."

Mr. Thompson remained in combat, then returned to the United States to train helicopter pilots. When the revelations about My Lai surfaced, he testified before Congress, a military inquiry and the court-martial of Lt. William L. Calley Jr., the platoon leader at My Lai, who was the only soldier to be convicted in the massacre.

When Mr. Thompson returned home, it seemed to him that he was viewed as the guilty party. "I'd received death threats over the phone," he told the CBS News program "60 Minutes" in 2004. "Dead animals on your porch, mutilated animals on your porch some mornings when you get up. So I was not a good guy."

On March 6, 1998, the Army presented the Soldier's Medal, for heroism not involving conflict with an enemy, to Mr. Thompson; to his gunner, Lawrence Colburn; and, posthumously, to Mr. Andreotta, who was killed in a helicopter crash three weeks after the My Lai massacre. The citation, bestowed in a ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, said the three crewmen landed "in the line of fire between American ground troops and fleeing Vietnamese civilians to prevent their murder."

On March 16, 1998, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Colburn attended a service at My Lai marking the 30th anniversary of the massacre. "Something terrible happened here 30 years ago today," Mr. Thompson was quoted as saying by CNN. "I cannot explain why it happened. I just wish our crew that day could have helped more people than we did."

Mr. Thompson worked as a veterans' counselor in Louisiana after leaving military service. A list of his survivors was not immediately available. Through the years, he continued to speak out, having been invited to West Point and other military installations to tell of the moral and legal obligations of soldiers in wartime. He was presumably mindful of the ostracism he had faced and the long wait for that medal ceremony in Washington. As he told The Associated Press in 2004: "Don't do the right thing looking for a reward, because it might not come."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/07/national/07thompson.html>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY DECEMBER 09, 2005

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,208
WOUNDED US [5 DEC + ESTIMATE]	≥ 16,329
KILLED UK	98
KILLED OTHER COALITION	103
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	603
KILLED CONTRACTORS	299
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 33,936
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 31,317
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIV	≥ 139,262

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	259
WOUNDED/INJURED US	658
KILLED COALITION	65
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	378
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS	≥ 3,525

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

TO SEE THE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE CASUALTIES GO TO WWW.MILITARYCITY.COM/2000CASUALTIES/

AFTERTHOUGHT

We are 137 days from when we are supposed to be facing off with Congress on veterans' legislation, and I don't see the effort coming together. This is the action that mobilized us in the first place. How about you? Will you sign up to apply your energies to this critical opportunity to get the attention of the Congress and teh nation? If so, please email Erik Jensen at ejensen@vuft.org. Ed.

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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