

SOUND OFF!



VOL. I, NO 22

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

10 JUNE 2006

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

On the morning of 5 June, the eve of the anniversary of the greatest invasion against tyranny in the history of the world, the following headline appeared in the Los Angeles Times: "Army Manual to Skip Geneva Detainee Rule"

Two questions popped into my mind instantly. "How have we come to this?"; and, "Who are we as Americans?" I want to try to answer both of these questions. The questions are profound, and my ability is slight, yet we all should wonder what those answers might be.

We are dedicated to truth in all matters affecting our soldiers and veterans. We each personally are devoted to truth beyond that limited set of issues, nonetheless, we can pursue this matter as it affects our soldiers, both as soldiers and as citizens. Regardless of the source of these policies, these are not partisan matters, rather they go to the heart of our second question, "Who are we as Americans?"

The proposed revision is to the Military Interrogation Manual, Field Manual (FM) 34-52 8 May 1987. The current manual says:

"The provisions of this publication are the subject of international agreements 1059 (National Distinguishing Letters for Use by NATO Forces), 2033 (Interrogation of Prisoners of War), 2044 (Procedures for Dealing with Prisoners of War), and 2084 (Handling and Reporting of Captured Enemy Equipment and Documents).

These principles and techniques of interrogation are to be used within the constraints established by FM 27-10 [The Law of Land Warfare], the Hague and Geneva Conventions, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

Sources for tactical interrogations may be civilian internees, insurgents, enemy prisoners of war (EPWs), defectors, refugees, displaced persons, and agents or suspected agents."

The proposal, so far, is to change the wording to permit humiliation as a technique. This may seem to be a small matter, but humiliation has extraordinary consequences in most cultures, including ours. Humiliation may only be part of this as yet unseen document at a Pentagon already accused repeatedly of torture, humiliation, and rendition. The prisoners at Abu Ghraib who were "just humiliated" cannot show their faces in their communities to this day. Since in 2002 the President "suspended" the Geneva Convention provisions in the case of the Al Qaeda and Taliban detainees, and instituted a new class of prisoner not mentioned in the conventions – the "illegal combatant" – we have been in violation of the current regulations for four years. The 1949 Geneva conventions specifically prohibit humiliation. One is tempted to ask, "If these acts – torture, humiliation, rendition – are all OK, why have both the acts and the locations where these horrific acts are being perpetrated been hidden from public view for four years?" If they are not just

acceptable but right, there shouldn't be any fear of touting their existence and maybe even bragging about their effectiveness, if that is possible.

We need to consider this proposed change to our American way of conducting wars on four historical counts:

1. Constitutional – Article VI, paragraph 2 "The Constitution ... and all Treaties ... shall be the Supreme Law of the Land."
2. Moral – We must treat each other fairly as a matter of moral purpose. We Americans generally operate on what John Rawls called "justice as fairness". Laws or rules we make in fairness must be made not only to apply to all, but to apply to all equally and without difference or favor. If it is a good law, I accept that it can apply to me not just to you.
3. National Honor – Justice Miller in 1884 wrote "A treaty is primarily a compact between independent nations. It depends for the enforcement of its provisions on the interest and the honor of the governments which are parties of it."
4. Practical – Whatever we claim for ourselves, others can claim against us. If we can torture and humiliate their combatants, others can torture and humiliate ours with impunity. We remove the taint of their terrible acts by sharing in them.

So to our first question, "How have we come to this?", the answer has to be that the Executive has: 1) placed itself above the Constitution of the United States; 2) chosen to operate outside of the general moral and legal view of most Americans; 3) elected to ignore the honor of the nation in adhering to treaties; and 4) chosen to expose our troops to humiliation, torture, and dishonor in retaliation for American policy.

Our second question, "Who are we as Americans?", is both easier and harder to answer. It is easy if we merely stick to the principles we loosely and often promote in patriotic speeches. We are good; we are honorable; we treat all with fairness; we honor our relations with other nations; we stand for right and justice; we really believe in democracy as the best form of government; we care about others, their welfare, and their views; we wish to promote peace and brotherhood throughout the world. It is hard if we try to answer the question from the view of others who judge our acts not our words. In that case we are an arrogant people who believe that we are somehow formed better than others, with better ideas and better motives, thus capable of acting as we please, not just without accommodating others' views, but with disdain for those views if they in any way vary from ours.

I want us to make the easy answer the right one. Two differences between the followers of democracy and those who follow other forms of government and civic organization are: we are not afraid to take the chances that go with acting in an upright and fair manner; and, we value national honor above false dreams of total security. [Ed.]

THE FOLLOWING EXTRACT IS FROM A LARGER ARTICLE ON OUR THEME

SOLDIERS ALREADY KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT

MG Daniel V. Wright – June 2006 – Army Magazine

...Long ago, Defense leaders correctly foresaw that military operations would occur in situations where the law governing international armed conflict would not apply, as a matter of law. They chose wisely to apply the law of war, including the Geneva Conventions, to all military operations as a matter of policy. That policy choice is embodied in the current Department of Defense directive on the law of war program.

That decision remains the right decision for a number of good reasons. First, it takes the high road, recognizing that it is not only the right thing to do, but also the route that yields the best results. Second, it provides a single standard and allows us to train our soldiers and leaders to that standard. ...

Even where exceptions have been made, so that the full panoply of law of war rules does not apply, neither torture nor inhumane treatment is authorized in military operations.

<More at:

www.USA.org/webpub/DeptArmyMagazine.nsf/byid/KHYL-6PWL8P>

... The current set of **“THE SOLDIER’S RULES”**

1. Soldiers fight only enemy combatants.
2. Soldiers do not harm enemies who surrender. They disarm them and turn them over to their superior.
3. Soldiers do not kill or torture enemy prisoners of war.
4. Soldiers collect and care for the wounded, whether friend or foe.
5. Soldiers do not attack medical personnel, facilities or equipment.
6. Soldiers destroy no more than the mission requires.
7. Soldiers treat civilians humanely.
8. Soldiers do not steal. Soldiers respect private property and possessions.
9. Soldiers should do their best to prevent violations of the law of war.
10. Soldiers report all violations of the law of war to their superior.

From Army Regulation 350-1, Army Training and Leader Development, January 2006.

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS

TAKE ACTION TO STOP TRICARE-LIMITING LANGUAGE

Just a heads-up on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007. According to SaveMyTRICARE.com:

House bill ([HR5122, Sec.710](#)) and pending senate bill ([S2766, Sec. 1079c](#)); include language which prohibits, for all practical purposes, the use of TRICARE if a beneficiary has an employer who offers health insurance. This language impacts both families of active duty personnel and primarily TRICARE eligible retired military. These passages as written will "limit" TRICARE beneficiaries, who are employed, from utilizing their TRICARE as PRIMARY COVERAGE.

Read more at www.congress.org/congressorg/webreturn?url=/savemytricare/issues/alert/?alertid=8802491, and then scroll down to the bottom of that page to ask your elected officials to oppose this language.

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. CHECK OUT THE "CANDIDATES" PAGE, WHICH IS OUR EFFORT TO LIST ALL VETERANS RUNNING FOR STATE-WIDE AND FEDERAL OFFICE IN THE U.S.; IT IS BEING UPDATED DAILY. PLEASE HELP US MAKE THIS AS COMPLETE A LIST AS POSSIBLE BY SENDING CANDIDATE INFO TO SANDY.COOK@VUFT.ORG.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

NEW MEMBERS are joining us every week. If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to our website at www.vuft.org/membership.html and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have with legislators. It shouldn't be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures.

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE

If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on our website "Join" page. Every little bit

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helps. We are getting very close to a favorable ruling on our status as a 501(c)(3), which will make your donations tax deductible on your federal taxes (they already are in the state of California). You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

No letters this issue

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING

Our legislators are doing their job on today's theme, witness the McCain Amendment to HR 2863 the "Department of Defense, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations to Address Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and Pandemic Influenza Act, 2006". But as you know, the President signed a "signing statement" when signing the DESA stating that the will of Congress on torture did not apply. <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/12/20051230-8.html see paragraph 8: the 7th of 10 exceptions in the signing statement to provisions of the Act >

The reason why the executive is trying to change FM 34-52 is that Congress inserted identical provisions in the Defense Authorization and Appropriation Acts of 2006 providing that no person in the custody or effective control of or under detention by the Department of Defense shall be subject to any treatment or technique of interrogation not authorized by and listed in the Army Field Manual on Intelligence Interrogation [FM 34-52].

So, if whatever dastardly deed we wish to commit isn't there, change the FM, then we will technically be following the will of Congress.

BILL TO ALLOW MEDIA COVERAGE AT DOVER DEFEATED

Rick Maze - Times staff writer

The House of Representatives has defeated an attempt to allow media coverage of the arrival and departure of the bodies of service members killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. <More at: www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-1818210.php>

PRESIDENT SIGNS NEW TAX LEGISLATION FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

May 30, 2006

On May 29, President Bush signed the "Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunities (HERO) Act", which amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow service members to still exclude their military compensation from federal income tax, but also contribute to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) while serving in a combat zone tax exclusion area.

<More at: www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060530-13137.html>

"VETERANS SHOULD NOT HAVE TO PAY FOR IDENTITY THEFT"

Salazar Introduces "Veterans Identity Protection Act of 2006"

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John T. Salazar, the only veteran from the Colorado delegation, last night introduced the "Veterans Identity Protection Act of 2006" (H.R. 5455), legislation aimed at helping veterans whose personal data was stolen from the home of a VA employee earlier this month.

"This Administration has clearly failed in its duty to protect those who have protected us," said Salazar. "Entire lifetimes of saving money and good work can now be devastated in an instant because of the VA's careless handling of personal information. And by not informing anyone of the breach for nearly a month, the VA squandered critical damage control time.

"This Administration owes far more than a sincere apology to our veterans for its cover up and careless handling of security. A full investigation is needed and the people in charge must be held accountable. But more immediately, we cannot allow our veterans to suffer while the government sorts out its mistakes. Veterans should not have to pay for identity theft - the least the government can do is cover the cost for veteran's to monitor their credit."

Salazar's legislation calls on the VA to:

- Provide one year of free credit monitoring to affected individuals.
- Provide one free credit report each year for two years after the end of credit monitoring, in addition to the free credit report available under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.
- Authorize \$1.25 billion in emergency funds for the first year of implementation.

A Member of the House Veteran's Affairs Committee, Salazar will also be participating in hearings this week to hold the VA accountable for its careless handling of security and to gain an honest accounting of the current situation.

www.housedemocrats.gov/news/librarydetail.cfm?library_content_id=758

RETREAT – NEWS

FIELD COMMANDERS TELL PENTAGON IRAQ WAR 'IS LOST'

Doug Thompson - Jun 5, 2006

Military commanders in the field in Iraq admit in private reports to the Pentagon the war "is lost" and that the U.S. military is unable to stem the mounting violence killing 1,000 Iraqi civilians a month. Even worse, they report the massacre of Iraqi civilians at Haditha is "just the tip of the iceberg" with overstressed, out-of-control American soldiers pushed beyond the breaking point both physically and mentally.

"We are in trouble in Iraq," says retired army general Barry McCaffrey. "Our forces can't sustain this pace, and I'm afraid the American people are walking away from this war."

Marine Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has clamped a tight security lid on the increasingly pessimistic reports coming out of field commanders in Iraq, threatening swift action against any military personnel who leak details to the press or public. <More at: www.capitolhillblue.com/artman/publish/article_8790.shtml>

LACKING FUNDS, ARMY CUTS BACK ON SPENDING

InsideDefense.com NewsStand | Jen DiMascio | May 31, 2006

Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody directed the Army last week to stop ordering many spare parts and supplies in an effort to pare back spending until Congress passes the fiscal year [2006 emergency supplemental spending bill](#) to fund operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

...The memo lays out how the Army will begin to cut spending on a week-to-week basis through the month of June. Starting May 26, the Army clamped down on ordering "non-critical" spare parts and supplies. "For supplies, requisition only what is necessary to accomplish assigned theater missions. All units should draw down on-hand inventories first," the memo states. In addition, the service should cancel "non-essential" travel, like conferences and training and stop shipping goods unless they are essential to support deployed units, the memo says. By June 6, the Army will put a hold on civilian hiring and postpone summer hiring. "You may continue recruiting efforts but cease all final offers of employment," Cody writes.

During the week of June 15, the service will release all temporary civilian employees who are funded through the operations and maintenance account, including personnel working at Army depots. All contract awards and new task orders on contracts will be frozen, and the service will suspend the use of government purchase cards, the memo states.

<More at: www.military.com/features/0,15240,99145,00.html>

GUARD STINT TO LAST 2 YEARS

Associated Press | May 20, 2006

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - President Bush's planned deployment of National Guard troops to the Mexican border would last at least two years with no clear end date, according to a Pentagon memo obtained Friday by The Associated Press.

The one-page "initial guidance" memo to National Guard leaders in border states does not address the estimated cost of the mission or when Soldiers would be deployed. But high-ranking officials in the California National Guard said they were told Friday that deployments would not begin before early June. <More at: www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,98016,00.html>

SENATORS BACK PLAN FOR GUARD

Associated Press | May 23, 2006

WASHINGTON - The Senate, eager to stanch the flow of illegal immigrants, signaled overwhelming support Monday for President Bush's plan to dispatch National Guard troops to states along the Mexican border.

No tour of duty could last longer than 21 days and troops would be excluded from "search, seizure, arrest or similar activity." They would support the Border Patrol, which has primary responsibility for intercepting illegal immigrants.

The vote was 83-10 on an amendment by Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., to authorize governors to order their states' National Guard units to perform annual duty training in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, or California. Administration officials have said Bush has the authority needed to deploy the Guard, making the vote a largely symbolic show of support.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,98218,00.html>>

SOME OF THIS MAKES 2006 SOUND VERY MUCH LIKE 1969

INSURGENTS KEEP U.S. AT BAY IN RAMADI

TODD PITMAN - Associated Press Writer – 22 May 2006

RAMADI, Iraq — Whole neighborhoods are lawless, too dangerous for police. Some roads are so bomb-laden that U.S. troops won't use them. Guerrillas attack U.S. troops nearly every time they venture out _ and hit their bases with gunfire, rockets or mortars when they don't.

Though not powerful enough to overrun U.S. positions, insurgents here in the heart of the Sunni Muslim triangle have fought undermanned U.S. and Iraqi forces to a virtual stalemate.

"It's out of control," says Army Sgt. 1st Class Britt Ruble, behind the sandbags of an observation post in the capital of Anbar province. "We don't have control of this ... we just don't have enough boots on the ground."

... "We just go out, lose people and come back," said Iraqi Col. Ali Hassan, whose men fight alongside the Americans. "The insurgents are moving freely everywhere. We need a big operation. We need control."

Some Americans also say ground needs to be taken and held. Most U.S. missions typically consist of going out, coming under fire and returning to base _ leaving behind a no-man's-land held by neither side that insurgents in black ski masks always pour back into.

"This is just 'we ride out, hold it for an hour, get hit, ride back in and now we don't hold it anymore,' what's the point?" said Ruble of the Army's 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment. "I believe in the cause and I believe in doing good, but when were going out, getting hurt and ... not accomplishing anything, why are we going out there? If you're saying killing one insurgent is worth one of my guys getting hurt ... you're crazy. That's like killing one guy in the Chinese army. What have you done? not a thing."

... U.S. commanders ... acknowledge perhaps a bigger problem. "They don't have to win. All they have to do is not lose," <More at: www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/22/AR2006052201064.html

TV REPORTERS DECRY DROP IN IRAQ COVERAGE

James Rainey – Los Angeles Times Staff Writer - June 3, 2006

The deaths of two CBS crew members have put the war back at the top of prime-time news, but journalists say they sense a growing apathy.

News of the bombing that felled a CBS news crew washed over Baghdad's tight-knit press corps like a tempest this week — evoking waves of anxiety, sadness, resolve and more than a little dismay.

American television journalists covering Iraq confronted the difficult reality that it took the deaths of a cameraman and soundman and critical injuries to correspondent Kimberly Dozier to help push Iraq back to the forefront of the nightly news back home.

By the end of April, the amount of time devoted to Iraq on the weeknight newscasts of the three major television networks had dropped nearly 60% from 2003, according to the independent Tyndall Report tracking service.

... ABC correspondent John Berman in Baghdad wrote in his blog recently that he and his colleagues felt like the castaways on the network's prime-time drama "Lost" — "We have come to the conclusion that no one knows we are here."

Earlier, he wrote: "There is definitely a sense that the public feels like it knows what is going on here, and doesn't want to hear anymore about it." <More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iraqtv3jun03,1,2785122.story>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
6/23-6/24		Chicago Armory - North Ave	Veterans Stand down	VVAW	Homeless Vets
8/10-8/13		Seattle. WA – place TBD	National Convention	Veterans for Peace	Periodic Meeting

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 veterans' events, regardless of purpose.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

EX-RESERVISTS DENIED BENEFITS

Reserve component servicemembers who serve a rotation in a war zone and leave military service when their obligation is completed do not receive any education benefits once they return to civilian life.

Rep. Vic Snyder (D-AK) brought up this issue during a House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel hearing. While the GI Bill provides education benefits for ex-servicemembers of the U.S. Army, reservists can receive their benefits only while in uniform. <More at: www.ausa.org/webpub/DeptArmyMagazine.nsf/byid/KHYL-6PWK7U>

GAO: BROKEN PAY SYSTEM

According to a senior Government Accountability Office official, wounded soldiers and families of soldiers killed in combat continue to struggle with a broken pay system, causing them significant frustration. Gregory Kurtz, the managing director of Forensic Audits and Special Investigation at the Government Accounting Office, explained to the Government Reform Committee that because of poor record keeping, wounded soldiers who had separated from the service have been reported absent without leave or denied loans because of their misclassification, and soldiers killed in combat have been shown to have significant military debt because of overpayments received. Servicemembers whose records have been mismanaged have had to deal with actions from debt collection agencies, which has posed serious hardship. Soldiers trying to update their records have found it can take several months to straighten out their pay. Between 2002 and 2005 approximately 1,300 soldiers have been affected by the system.

Kurtz recommended that all 23 of the Army's medical hold companies be reviewed to ensure soldiers' status is correctly listed in their personnel files. He also recommended that Congress extend its debt relief act for wounded soldiers past December 31, 2007. <www.ausa.org/webpub/DeptArmyMagazine.nsf/byid/KHYL-6PWK7U>

INCREASING NUMBER OF YOUNG VETERANS OUT OF WORK

Leo Shane III - Stars and Stripes - Mideast edition - June 4, 2006

Jobless rate is 15.6 percent for vets under 25

WASHINGTON — The number of young veterans receiving unemployment checks increased again in 2005 even as the overall number of veterans without jobs decreased, according to new statistics from the Department of Labor.

Officials reported a 15.6 percent unemployment rate for 20- to 24-year-old veterans, up 2 percentage points from 2004. It's also 4.6 percentage points above 2003 figures and four times the 3.9 percent unemployment rate of veterans of all ages last year.

... The Defense Department already offers transition assistance to troops before they leave the service, and Ciccolella said labor officials are expanding information on resume building and job interviews for younger veterans on their employment assistance site, www.hirevetsfirst.gov. <More at: www.estripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=37642>

PTSD SHOWS UP AFTER 30 YEARS – NOT AFTER ONLY 30 DAYS AS SOME WOULD ARGUE

VIETNAM STAYS WITH VETERAN

By Tom Mitchel - l2006-05-27

Sporting a blue-and-white thick-striped shirt, mildly faded blue jeans and oval-lensed wire rim glasses, Charles R. Joseph Sr. looks as laid back as his clothes.

Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

Joseph left Vietnam 33 years ago, but Vietnam never left him. The one-sided relationship left him with an internal injury all too common to war's battlefield survivors: post-traumatic stress disorder.

In 1971, Joseph, 55, returned from a 16-month tour of Vietnam with the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division. He came home with two Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart. The first two decorations honored Joseph's valor during separate enemy assaults. The third medal documented the physical price he paid: officially, shrapnel wounds, but, more subtly, the development of a permanent psychiatric disorder that, Joseph says, undermined his mental health.

... A combustible blend of depression, fear, guilt and rage, Joseph says, jointly sabotaged his life after the war. In the process, Joseph's civilian life dissolved. When Joseph handed over his towing business to his son, Charlie Jr., last year due to Joseph's strain, he was already divorced. He now receives disability benefits.

"I held it in, and finally broke," said Joseph, who suffered a nervous breakdown two years ago while trying to relax at his get-away house on Smith Mountain Lake. <More at: http://dnronline.com/news_details.php?AID=4581&CHID=1>

30 YEARS AGO WE HAD TO BUY THEM OURSELVES ON THE ECONOMY – AND IT WAS ILLEGAL. NOW THEY ARE BEING PRESCRIBED LEGALLY!

THE IRAQ WAR—ON DRUGS

Terry J. Allen - May 31, 2006

Ready for deployment is not the same as mentally healthy, and the army's long-term interests smack hard against its need for warm bodies, no matter how dangerous continued action may be to an individual's mental health.

Wounded U.S. soldiers are being patched up and returned to battle before they are healed. The wounds in this case are to the psyche, caused by the trauma and horror that are as integral to war as guns and death.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, when "suck it up" fails to snap a soldier out of depression or panic, the Army turns to drugs. "Soldiers I talked to were receiving bags of antidepressants and sleeping meds in Iraq, but not the trauma care they needed," says Steve Robinson, a Defense Department intelligence analyst during the Clinton administration.

Sometimes sleeping pills, antidepressants and tranquilizers are prescribed by qualified personnel. Sometimes not. Sgt. Georg Anderas Pogany told *Salon* that after he broke down in Iraq, his team sergeant told him "to pull himself together, gave him two Ambien, a prescription sleep aid, and ordered him to sleep."

Other soldiers self-medicate. "We were so junked out on Valium, we had no emotions anymore," Iraq vet John Crawford told "Fresh Air" host Terry Gross. He and others in his unit in Iraq became addicted to Valium.

... "It concerns us when we hear military doctors say, 'It's wonderful that we have these drugs available to cope with second or third deployments,'" Joyce Raezer of the National Military Family Association told *In These Times*.

<More at: www.inthesetimes.com/site/main/article/2670/>

ON THE HOMEFRONT: WAR TAKES ITS TOLL ON OVERBURDENED MILITARY FAMILIES

Emily Yellin - May 28, 2006

The idea that war is men's work has been around for as long as war itself. Women, tradition has it, were the supporting players -- dutiful, uncomplaining and sheltered from any real action. One of the most time-honored such images was the wife or mother "left behind." She sent her soldier off. She welcomed him home. And in between, she was not to be seen or heard from much but presumably pined away in patriotic martyrdom.

Iraq is far from the first war in which the roles assigned to women do not match up with what they actually do or who they are. But it is the first war that has included women, for better or worse, playing major parts in the main story line. Think Condoleezza Rice, Cindy Sheehan, Jessica Lynch, Lynndie England and Jill Carroll. Now, two new books about the Iraq War have given a 21st-century recasting to the war wife. Stacy Banner's "When the War Came Home" and Kristin Henderson's "While They're at War" provide vivid descriptions and heart-wrenching details of the way war reaches into every aspect of the lives of soldiers' spouses. The books also make clear that the government's wavering support for the needs of military families in this particular war has made their survival here at home seem as tumultuous and uncertain as that of their soldiers in Iraq.

<More at: www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/entertainment/books/14688240.htm>

THIS IS A FOLLOW-UP TO LAST ISSUE'S OUTSTANDING GROUP OF ARTICLES BY JENNIFER JACOBS ON PTSD FROM THE DES MOINES REGISTER

PLEASE SEE THIS ISSUE'S "ADD-ON" FOR MORE ON THIS SUBJECT

HELP SOLDIERS SURVIVE LINGERING STRESS OF WAR

Register Editorial Board - May 26, 2006

Set tone that encourages seeking treatment.

After the Vietnam war, some psychiatrists argued that features specific to that war, such as not being able to distinguish friends from enemies, extreme violence and unclear military goals, made it especially likely that soldiers would have long-lasting psychiatric problems. Some doctors called it "post-Vietnam syndrome."

Now American soldiers are involved in another war, this time in Iraq. A war of extreme violence. A war where it's difficult to know whether an approaching child is an innocent victim or a suicide bomber. A war in which political and military goals are

intertwined. Thousands of soldiers are returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, an ailment resulting from exposure to the threat of serious injury or death. Symptoms can include nightmares, flashbacks, withdrawn moods and emotional numbness.

But too few soldiers are seeking help for their problems.

<More at: <http://desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060526/OPINION03/605260352/1045>>

SOUTH TEXAS IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF THE WEAKENING OF VA SUPPORT

VETERANS SAY CARE IS SLIPPING AWAY

Scott Huddleston - Express-News Staff Writer 05/28/2006

KERRVILLE - Vowing to fight as hard for fairness as they did for their nation, South Texas veterans are sounding a call for health care services in areas they say are underserved. Amid budget cuts and revamping of the South Texas Veterans Health Care System, the Kerrville Veterans Hospital, a full-service hospital in the 1990s, has been stripped of such specialties as cardiology, endocrinology, orthopedics and dermatology.

A contract for the urologist there will expire next month, forcing veterans in a 14-county area to go to San Antonio for treatment, Alan Hill, president of the Hill Country chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America, said at a rally Saturday. Though routine procedures such as oral surgery, colonoscopies, podiatry care and X-rays are still done in Kerrville, Hill said the hospital will close by the end of the year, "if we don't put a stop to it." "A nursing home with a clinic is all it'll be," he told about 120 supporters outside the hospital. <More at: www.mysanantonio.com/news/metro/stories/MYSA052806.05B.VA_caravan.81e4c03.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

DONALD E. RUDOLPH SR., 1921 – 2006 – MEDAL OF HONOR

Luzon, Philippine Islands, October 1944. Sgt. Donald E. Rudolph, 20th Infantry, 6th Infantry Division, single-handedly destroyed 8 pillboxes, one tank, and killed 40 Japanese soldiers.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF JUNE 7, 2006

This week, the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps announced an increase in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Navy and Coast Guard numbers decreased. The net collective result is 1,222 more reservists mobilized than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 80,425; Navy Reserve, 4,924; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,315; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,168; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 364. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 100,196, including both units and individual augmentees.

A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2006/d20060607nqr.pdf.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY 9 JUNE 2006

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,489
WOUNDED US [EST. NO DoD UPDATE SINCE 4/29] ≥	18,356
KILLED UK	113
KILLED OTHER COALITION	113
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	645
KILLED CONTRACTORS	339
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 34,769
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 42,646
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 150,000+

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	299
WOUNDED/INJURED US	876
KILLED COALITION	82
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	401
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS	32,034

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/

AFTERTHOUGHTS

I WAS A SOLDIER

" By Colonel Daniel K. Cedusky, AUS, Retired

I was a Soldier: That's the way it is, that's what we were...are. We put it, simply, without any swagger, without any brag, in those four plain words.

We speak them softly, just to ourselves. Others may have forgotten. They are a manifesto to mankind; speak those four words anywhere in the world -- yes, anywhere -- and many who hear will recognize their meaning.

They are a pledge. A pledge that stems from a document which said: "I solemnly Swear", "to protect and defend" and goes on from there, and from a Flag called "Old Glory".

Listen, and you can hear the voices echoing through them, words that sprang white-hot from bloody lips, shouts of "medic", whispers of "Oh God!", forceful words of "Follow Me". If you can't hear them, you weren't, if you can you were.

"Don't give up the ship! Fight her till she dies... Damn the torpedoes! Go ahead! . . . Do you want to live forever? . . . Don't cheer, boys; the poor devils are dying."

Laughing words, and words cold as January ice, words that when spoken, were meant, .. "Wait till you see the whites of their eyes". The echo's of I was a Soldier.

You can hear the slow cadences at Gettysburg, or Arlington honoring not a man, but a Soldier, perhaps forgotten by his nation...Oh! Those Broken Promises.

You can hear those echoes as you have a beer at the "Post", walk in a parade, go to The Wall, visit a VA hospital, hear the mournful sounds of tap, or gaze upon the white crosses, row upon row. But they aren't just words; they're a way of life, a pattern of living, or a way of dying.

They made the evening, with another day's work done; supper with the wife and kids; and no Gestapo snooping at the door and threatening to kick your teeth in.

They gave you the right to choose who shall run our government for us, the right to a secret vote that counts just as much as the next fellow's in the final tally; and the obligation to use that right, and guard it and keep it clean.

They prove the right to hope, to dream, to pray; the obligation to serve. These are some of the meanings of those four words, meanings we don't often stop to tally up or even list.

Only in the stillness of a moonless night, or in the quiet of a Sunday afternoon, or in the thin dawn of a new day, when our world is close about us, do they rise up in our memories and stir in our sentient hearts.

And we are remembering Iwo Jima, Wake Island, and Bataan, Inchon, and Chu Lai, Knox and Benning, Great Lakes and Paris Island, Travis and Chanute, Baghdad, Kabul, Kuwait City, and many other places long forgotten by our civilian friends.

They're plain words, those four. Simple words. You could carve them on stone; you could carve them on the mountain ranges. You could sing them, to the tune of "Yankee Doodle."

But you needn't. You needn't do any of those things, for those words are graven in the hearts of Veterans, they are familiar to 24,000,000 tongues, every sound and every syllable. If you must write them, put them on my Stone.

But when you speak them, speak them softly, proudly, I will hear you, for I too, I was a Soldier, I AM A VETERAN.

Inspired By "Creed" I am an American by Hal Borland

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

THIS ISSUE'S ADD-ON – SOMETHING EXTRA FOR YOU TO USE, PERHAPS TO HELP A VET:

I sent the following article to a psychologist friend, because this approach didn't pass the smell test for me, yet I was certainly not trained to assess its efficacy professionally. Her response is interesting and convincing:

"Sandy--I went on the site and "took" the test for depression as one would answer the questions if they in fact were experiencing some significant symptoms of depression. The screening is a fairly straightforward tool which covers the basic questions one would begin an evaluation with. The results were accurately given and the resources suggested seemed appropriate. ...One of the things I really liked about the results sheet is that it indicated that even if I hadn't "scored" in the area of concern but felt like there were some issues going on, it gave a resource for this as well.

Overall I think that these types of screenings are very good--they give permission for people to consider that they might need some help--without making a public commitment. This often allows them to "try on" the idea for awhile and then perhaps take some action. It also gives them an explanation for experiences that might seem very scary and hard to deal with--in that respect it "normalizes" their experience--often if people can have a name for what they are dealing with it becomes easier to deal with/seek help for.

We psychologists will be participating in a depression/suicide prevention screening in the community in September and will probably be using a similar type of screening tool and also providing information regarding depression, etc.

So--guess overall, this looks like a pretty good program--if people trust that it is confidential--which may be difficult at this point in time given the latest NSA spying issues! Hope this is helpful."

MILITARY MEMBERS CAN TEST MENTAL HEALTH ONLINE

David Crary - The Associated Press - *May 31, 2006*

NEW YORK -- Concerned by rising stress levels in the ranks, the Defense Department has quietly started an online self-screening program in hopes that anonymity will help some service members and their spouses overcome reluctance to confront possible mental health problems.

"It's an excellent tool -- available 24/7 so you can do it at night when nobody's watching," said Deborah Manning, who coordinates Army substance-abuse programs at Fort Benning, Ga.

Air Force Col. Joyce Adkins, a psychologist at the Pentagon's Health Affairs office, said several thousand people have used the Mental Health Self-Assessment Program since it went online four months ago. It assesses answers to questions about behavior and mood swings. If responses indicate possible trouble, it gives options for seeking help.

The effort is among the latest of numerous military initiatives undertaken to cope with stress, depression and other mental health problems that have proliferated since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan led to tougher overseas deployment schedules.

The Army, for example, has assigned combat stress teams to units in Iraq following an increase in suicides among soldiers there. Service members returning from Iraq have been required to complete a survey used to decide who might need further psychological help; a recent Pentagon study found that a third of them received counseling.

The online program is for members of all military branches, whether or not they have been in war zones, and also for their families.

Tom Angelo, a sonar technician who helps run substance abuse programs at the Navy's submarine base in Bangor, said the self-screening program provides an opportunity for a service member's spouse to seek help in a private, low-key manner.

"There's still some underlying stigma that we have to overcome -- a lot of people who don't want to mess with their husband's or wife's career. This online process definitely opens up more of an opportunity."

The online program, developed by a non-profit group called Screening for Mental Health, is divided into subsections addressing depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, bipolar disorder and alcohol abuse. It is free and confidential; participants are asked about deployment records and military status but not for any details that would identify them.

On the Net: www.militarymentalhealth.org/welcome.asp

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/national/272165_mental31.html © 1998-2006 Seattle Post-Intelligencer

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