

# SOUND OFF!



VOL. I, NO 20 THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

*"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"*

10 MAY 2006

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

We keep re-visiting the subject of shared national sacrifice. Maybe we ought to talk even more about shared national awareness. Without awareness, nothing happens.

In a recent news story it was reported that in one American city, on a day when only 1100 people showed up for a veterans' march, 40,000 showed up for a paint-ball championship.

Soon Memorial Day will produce an article or two on Iraq and Afghanistan, none on peace-keeping missions anywhere, and probably 40 pages of Memorial Day Sale ads.

Is this what we are meant to do? Are we meant to honor our brothers and sisters by buying a mattress on sale? Or better yet, buy something made in another country like a Japanese car, or a Chinese piece of clothing, or a German coffee maker so that we can put the nail in the coffin of good manufacturing jobs for returning veterans.

What does it take to wake up the American people? What does it take to make them see the veterans coming home, wounded, torn, fractured in body and spirit? The yellow ribbon stickers and "Support the Troops" mean almost nothing except "this sticker makes **ME** feel good."

The politicians' speeches, even their legislative scribbles, mean almost nothing but "see how patriotic I am." There are still only about a handful of real Congressional veterans' bills on the move out of hundreds written in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.

When I was a kid, on every street corner down town just prior to Memorial Day, World War I and then WW II veterans from the American Legion sold poppies. If you were broke, or a little kid, they gave you the poppy. We wore the poppy to school, on the playground, to church, everywhere, and then retired them to our keepsake box in the bedroom. How many Americans remember the meaning of the poppy? Who wears it today?

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow,  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky,  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.



We are the dead. Short days ago,  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved and now we lie,  
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe  
To you, from failing hands, we throw,  
The torch, be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us, who die,  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow,  
In Flanders Fields.

John McCrae

We need to think on this and ponder it's significance. As long as the American people can hide from the results, they and their representatives don't have to face the war's consequences. This recent op-ed states it well:

"The extent of the suffering caused by the war seldom penetrates the consciousness of most Americans. For the public at large, the dead and the wounded are little more than statistics. They're out of sight, and thus mostly out of mind.

The media are much more focused on the trendy problem of steroids in baseball than, say, the agony of the once healthy young men and women who are now struggling to resurrect their lives after being paralyzed, or losing their eyesight, or shedding one or two or three or even four limbs in Iraq."

Bob Herbert, NY Times, 4 May 2006

## 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. 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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.

Last week we picked up 25 new members and 80 new subscribers. If you are a subscriber and have not yet joined us, please go to our website and join us. Although each of you is far more important than the numbers, the numbers are important too because they give credence to our public appeals and to our executive and legislative advocacy efforts.

### **SUPPORTING THE CAUSE**

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

## MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

Dear Friends, *[letter edited for length]*

As a veteran myself, I am deeply disturbed by a growing trend. Our brave men and women, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, are returning from overseas having served their nation proudly and they are being denied the very services they deserve. Since 2003, over 260,000 U.S. veterans have been denied Veterans Administration health care. President Bush, in response, has requested an increase in Veteran co-pays from \$8 to \$15 and an increase in the enrollment fee to \$250 to cover the rising cost of veterans' benefits. Tens of thousands of veterans have applied for training and education assistance for which they are entitled under the GI Bill and they are being denied. And reports suggest that over 80% of those who call into the Veterans Administration receive inaccurate information. As a nation, I believe we have a moral obligation to our veterans to secure health, education, and welfare for them and for their families.

### **Hundreds of thousands of military veterans are being denied health care benefits.**

A study published by the New England Journal of Medicine and conducted by the Department of Psychiatric and Behavioral Sciences at Walter Reed Hospital showed that 17% of the troops returning from duty in Iraq met the strict screening criteria for mental problems such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The Veterans Association testified before Congress indicating that nearly 25,000 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with mental-health disorders from war. In response to the concern of rising costs, Veterans Affairs has announced it will review over 70,000 cases to root out fraud. I am sure I am not alone when I say I believe this is outrageous.

...This administration has argued that the growing number of veterans receiving payments grew at an alarming rate over the past several years, from 120,000 cases in 1999 to 216,000 in 2004, taking the costs of PTSD benefit payments from \$1.7 billion in 1999 to \$4.3 billion in 2004. What this administration fails to admit--and the Republican-controlled Congress fails to understand--is that we went to war during that time. We dispatched hundreds of thousands of troops to fight a war on terror unprepared, only to find our troops the victims of physical and emotional terror and trauma. Unless we take dramatic steps, the Veterans Administration will face upwards of a \$2.7 billion shortfall.

...In Vietnam, up to 30% of the men and women who served and returned suffered from PTSD. Yes, these individuals are still receiving disability payments. Yes, those who return from Iraq and Afghanistan and qualify under the strict medical standards as PTSD will receive disability payment in perpetuity. And they should. They served our nation honorably, and just because our President and our Congress refuses to acknowledge the financial implications of this war does not mean that individuals ... should suffer the consequences ....

## **Hundreds of thousands of military veterans are being denied education assistance through the GI Bill.**

Lance Culver is a young Navy veteran who returned to his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky ready to serve his community. Lance wanted to be a police officer and was willing to go through all the necessary police academy training. Beyond the initial training, Louisville Metro Police requires on-the-job training, a cost often incurred by the police officer. Under the GI Bill, those who have gone before Lance received upwards of \$12,000 for training for domestic law enforcement. These services were cut in July 2005, according to Veterans Education officials. Lance was left holding the bill for training to serve his community.

...In 1944 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into act the GI Bill of Rights, it changed the lives of every soldier who from served. Within seven years, nearly 8 million veterans received education benefits: 2.3 million attended colleges and universities, 3.5 million received school training; and 3.4 million received on-the-job training. But the effect was so much more than that. This program, which could just as well have been called No Soldier Left Behind, gave the nation a renewed hope. The reality is that education provides a social safety net that eases trauma, tension, and difficulties adjusting to a life outside of the military. Today, even those who do receive monies from the GI Bill are caught in a gap where the funding level often covers less than 50% of the education costs for a public college or university.

### **We must stand up to this injustice.**

Many of our brave young men and women have returned home having incurred some type of injury that prohibits them from remaining on active duty. Some have lost the capacity to shut their eyes without the horrors haunting their thoughts. Some have lost limbs. These are our heroes. These are the men and women upon whom we confer Purple Hearts and our deepest gratitude. To deny these men and women the benefits they deserve is a wound inflicted ten-fold, and further wounds these soldiers do not need.

We must demand:

1. A fully-funded VA health care system for all veterans;
2. A system of protection and expansion of long-term medical care and mental health services;
3. A system which has a timely transition from active duty to veteran status;
4. A system which provides for full education benefits and subsequent transition training.

I urge you to stand up to this injustice. Join me in sending the message to Washington that we will not allow this injustice to continue.

John Rinaldi  
Candidate for Congress, CA-52

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

As usual not much happening. California is on the verge of establishing a commission to look into the actual experience of veterans with various benefits programs. The commission, however, will not have the power to do anything except "advise" about any problems they find, nor will they be mandated to actually talk to veterans.

## **RETREAT – NEWS**

### **I UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM AS THE PRESIDENT STATES IT**

#### **BUSH WARNS OF MORE TOUGH FIGHTING**

Associated Press | April 30, 2006

WASHINGTON - President Bush warned Saturday of tough fighting to come and "more days of sacrifice and struggle" in Iraq as April drew to a close as the deadliest month for American forces this year.

"The enemy is resorting to desperate acts of violence because they know the establishment of democracy in Iraq will be a double defeat for them," Bush said in his weekly radio address as he saluted the emergence of a permanent government.

"There will be more tough fighting ahead in Iraq and more days of sacrifice and struggle," he cautioned. "Yet, the enemies of freedom have suffered a real blow in recent days, and we have taken great strides on the march to victory."

<More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,95776,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,95776,00.html)>

### **AND THIS STORY CONFIRMS IT**

#### **APRIL DEADLIEST THIS YEAR FOR GIs**

Associated Press | April 29, 2006

BAGHDAD, Iraq - An American Soldier was killed in a roadside bombing north of Baghdad, the U.S. military said Friday, making April the deadliest month for American forces in Iraq this year.

Al-Qaida's No. 2 leader issued a video saying that hundreds of suicide bombings in Iraq have "broken the back" of the U.S. military - the latest in a volley of messages by the terror network's most prominent figures.

Ayman al-Zawahri, an Egyptian militant believed to be hiding in Afghanistan or Pakistan, said that U.S. and British forces had bogged down in Iraq and "have achieved nothing but loss, disaster and misfortune."

American troops, acting on tips from Iraqi intelligence, meanwhile, killed the reputed al-Qaida boss of Samarra, where a Shiite shrine bombing two months ago nearly plunged the country into civil war.

The latest American death, which occurred Thursday evening, brought the number of U.S. troops who have died this month in Iraq to at least 69.

Although that figure is well below some of the bloodiest months of the Iraq conflict, it marks a sharp increase over March, when 31 American service members were killed. January's death toll stood at 62 and February's at 55. In December 2005, 68 Americans died. <More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,95756,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,95756,00.html)>

## **SO I UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR MORE TROOPS**

### **HOUSE PANEL BOOSTS GROUND TROOP NUMBERS**

Liz Sidoti - Associated Press Writer - May 4, 2006

WASHINGTON — A House military bill increases by thousands the maximum number of ground troops the military can maintain \_ and sends a message to the Pentagon about lawmakers' concerns of adequate force levels in wartime.

On a 60-1 vote, the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday approved the bill that includes the provision on troop levels and sets spending levels of \$512.9 billion for the military for next year. That includes \$50 billion to cover the first portion of next year's costs for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Overall, the House bill "reflects our committee's strong and continuing support for the brave men and women of the United States armed services," said Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., the committee's chairman.

"We've done good work. This is an excellent bill. It does a real service for those in uniform," said Rep. Ike Skelton of Missouri, lead Democrat on the House committee.

House lawmakers shaped the bill to address concerns arising from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. Actual money for specific programs is provided in separate, later legislation. <More at [www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/politics/3840158.html](http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/politics/3840158.html)>

## **SO I GUESS I UNDERSTAND THE NEED TO DO THIS**

### **GRANDMOTHER DEPLOYED TO IRAQ 10 MONTHS BEFORE RETIREMENT**

DUBUQUE, Iowa (AP) -- A grandmother in eastern Iowa is getting one last call to duty.

Janet Grass, 52, had planned to retire from the military in about ten months after spending 19 years in the Navy Reserve. Instead, she has been ordered to leave her job as a special-education teacher in Cascade and do security work in the Middle East. <More at: [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12538990](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12538990)>

## **AND THE NEED TO BRING BACK A HERO AFTER ALMOST 40 YEARS**

### **MOH RECIPIENT LEADING TROOPS IN KUWAIT**

Army News Service | Crystal Rothermel | April 28, 2006

Kuwait - Life can go down many avenues. For Gordon Roberts, the roads treaded deep into Vietnam's Thua Thien Province, testing his every attribute and winning a spot in military history.

While the path was treacherous and the moment ruthless, the experience did not deter him from life's course. In fact, it was only the beginning.

Today, Lt. Col. Gordon Roberts leaves footprints in the sands of Kuwait and in the hearts and minds of today's Soldiers as he offers experience and advice. He may be the youngest living Medal of Honor recipient, but he sees himself as a comrade, a leader and developer of troops. He is commander of Troop Support Battalion, 1st Corps Support Command and head of Force Protection at Arifjan. <More at: [www.military.com/features/0,15240,95663,00.html](http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,95663,00.html)>

## **AND EVEN THE NEED TO DO THIS [SHOWN AFTER THE SECOND FREE DRINK?]**

### **DOD TAKES RECRUITING TO NEW HEIGHTS**

Associated Press | May 08, 2006

CHICAGO - Hit by one of its most difficult recruiting periods in decades, the Defense Department is paying United Airlines to show passengers a Pentagon-produced video touting military jobs.

The 13-minute video "Today's Military" is played between standard in-flight programming, such as NBC sitcoms or Discovery Channel productions, the Chicago Tribune reported.

It profiles five military jobs, none in dangerous regions such as Iraq or Afghanistan. The video shows only one soldier beyond U.S. borders: an Army animal-care specialist on a humanitarian mission in Thailand.

<More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,96457,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,96457,00.html)>

## **BUT THIS SMACKS OF DESPERATION!**

### **AUTISM - THE SIGNING OF A DISABLED PORTLAND MAN DESPITE WARNINGS REFLECTS PROBLEMS NATIONALLY FOR MILITARY ENLISTMENT**

Michelle Roberts - Oregonian - May 08, 2006

Jared Guinther is 18. Tall and lanky, he will graduate from Marshall High School in June. Girls think he's cute, until they try to talk to him and he stammers or just stands there -- silent.

Diagnosed with autism at age 3, Jared is polite but won't talk to people unless they address him first. It's hard for him to make friends. He lives in his own private world.

Jared didn't know there was a war raging in Iraq until his parents told him last fall -- shortly after a military recruiter stopped him outside a Southeast Portland strip mall and complimented him on his black Converse All Stars.

"When Jared first started talking about joining the Army, I thought, 'Well, that isn't going to happen,'" said Paul Guinther, Jared's father. "I told my wife not to worry about it. They're not going to take anybody in the service who's autistic."

But they did. Last month, Jared came home with papers showing that he not only had enlisted, but also had signed up for the Army's most dangerous job: cavalry scout. He is scheduled to leave for basic training Aug. 16.

<More at: [www.oregonlive.com/printer/printer.ssf?/base/news/1146882329307730.xml&coll=7](http://www.oregonlive.com/printer/printer.ssf?/base/news/1146882329307730.xml&coll=7)>

## **SO HOW IS THIS DELAY CONSISTENT WITH THE PRESIDENT'S PREVIOUS STATEMENT ONLY EIGHT DAYS BEFORE?**

### **DOD ANNOUNCES ADJUSTMENT TO IRAQ DEPLOYMENT**

IMMEDIATE RELEASE - No. 407-06 - May 8, 2006

The Department of Defense announced today that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, based in Schweinfurt, Germany, will not begin its deployment to Iraq in early May as scheduled.

Additional information about this unit, to include its revised deployment date in the rotation plan, will be announced as decisions are made.

The adjustment to the unit's deployment was made as commanders assess the security situation on the ground in Iraq.

Decisions about troop levels are conditions-based. In consultation with the Iraqi Government, commanders continue to assess the situation to ensure sufficient force levels to best support the Iraqi government.

<More at: [www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060508-12984.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060508-12984.html)>

## **MAYBE THEY ARE DOING IT SO THAT THERE WILL BE ENOUGH TO GO AROUND?**

### **WAR ON THE CHEAP**

Bob Kerr - Providence Journal - May 3, 2006

The Iraq war has been the war fought on the cheap - not enough body armor, not enough armor on vehicles, not enough night vision equipment.

It has been the war in which packages from back home have had to fill some crucial needs.

Now, we have chow call at the Greenwood Credit Union in Warwick, R.I. It's the latest in home-front intervention. It's partially in response to the unthinkable image of U.S. Marines approaching Iraqi citizens and asking for food because they do not have enough. There's a big barrel in the lobby of the credit union on Post Road in Warwick. It's decorated with ribbons and it's there because Karen Boucher-Andoscia's son, Nick Andoscia, called and asked his mother to send food.

... Nick told his mother that he and the men in his unit were all about 10 pounds lighter in their first few weeks in Iraq. They were pulling 22-hour patrol shifts. They were getting two meals a day and they were not meals to remember.

"He told me the two meals just weren't cutting it. He said the Iraqi food was usually better. They were going to the Iraqis and basically saying, 'feed me.'" <More at: [www.projo.com/news/bobkerr/projo\\_20060426\\_wedco26.a4cf005.html](http://www.projo.com/news/bobkerr/projo_20060426_wedco26.a4cf005.html)>

**IT'S NOT THAT WE DON'T SUPPORT YOU, AND WE CERTAINLY SUPPORT THE TROOPS, IT'S JUST THAT WE ARE CONFUSED ABOUT THE INCONSISTENCIES**

**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**

**EXCERPTS FROM A LONGER ARTICLE AND WORTH READING IN ITS ENTIRETY**

**SHORTCHANGING THE WOUNDED**

By Judith Coburn

... "[The] VA cannot meet the ongoing needs of veterans of past deployments while also reaching out to new combat veterans of [Iraq and Afghanistan] and their families within current resources and current models of treatment."

The VA is now paying out \$4.3 billion a year for PTSD disability to 215,871 veterans. The report also found that a returning war veteran suffering from emotional illness now has to wait an average of 60 days before he or she can even be evaluated for diagnosis, let alone treated. Forty-two percent of VA primary care clinics had no mental-health staff members and 53% of those that did had only one. Eighty-two percent of new patients needed to be in the most intensive PTSD treatment programs, the VA report found, but 40% of those programs were already so full that they could only take a few more patients; 20% said they were too full to take any at all.

"VA's data show a 30% increase in the number of [Iraq and Afghan War] veterans who have an initial diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder from the end of FY 2005," says Rep. Michael Michaud (Dem.-Me). "I applaud the courage of these veterans who have sought help, but the administration refuses to acknowledge fully the demand and need for mental health services."

Further down the line: How many Iraqi veterans will eventually join the ranks of the 400,000 homeless vets on the streets of American cities? (Right now the VA takes care of only 100,000 such vets, according to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.)

...In World War II, 12 million Americans fought on behalf of a nation of 130 million. Twenty-five percent of American men served in that war. They came back heroes to a country more than willing to give them the latest medical care, compensate them for their wounds, send them to college, and help them buy homes. Fifty years later in Iraq -- an unpopular war -- only 1.3 million are fighting for a nation of 300 million. **"Never have so few sacrificed so much for so many,"** one Desert Storm veteran said recently. Iraq may be the wrong cause for sacrifice. But Vietnam veterans taught us that once war starts we must be willing to take care of everyone who gets hurt in it.

*Judith Coburn has covered war and its aftermath in Indochina, Central America, and the Middle East for the Village Voice, Mother Jones, the Los Angeles Times, and Tomdispatch, among other media outlets.*

<More at: [www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=80291](http://www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=80291)>

## **WANTED: JOBS FOR MILITARY VETS**

Luladey B. Tadesse - The News Journal - 05/05/2006

### **Helmets to Hardhats eases the transition to the civilian work force**

... The unemployment rate of veterans between the ages of 20 and 24 is about 15 percent -- nearly double the rate of nonveterans in the same age group. Many veterans join the military out of high school with little or no civilian job experience and without skills needed to find a skilled job, experts said.

"It's a national disgrace," said retired Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Matthew P. Caulfield. "Many of these men are now married and they desperately need a job. And they need a job with benefits."

Caulfield founded a national program called Helmets to Hardhats in 2002 to create employment opportunities for veterans by linking them with building trade unions and contractors around the country. Helmets to Hardhats, a nonprofit administered by the Center for Military Recruitment, Assessment, and Veterans Employment, is now co-sponsored by 15 major building and construction trades organizations, as well as their employer associations, which together represent about 82,000 contractors.

The states in the program so far are"

Connecticut	Maine	Rhode Island
Delaware	Massachusetts	Tennessee
Illinois	Missouri	Vermont
Indiana	Nebraska	Virginia
Iowa	New Hampshire	Washington
Kentucky	Ohio	West Virginia

## **WOUNDED SOLDIERS LEFT IN DEBT**

Associated Press | April 28, 2006

WASHINGTON - After suffering paralysis, brain damage, lost limbs and other wounds in war, nearly 900 Army Soldiers ran up \$1.2 million in debt because of the military's "complex, cumbersome" pay system, congressional investigators said Thursday.

The report from the Government Accountability Office said another 400 who died in the wars had \$300,000 in debt but that the Defense Department doesn't pursue collection of people killed in combat.

<More at: [www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,95636,00.html](http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,95636,00.html)

and at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/26/AR2006042602512.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/26/AR2006042602512.html)>

## **PUSH TO CUT VA BENEFITS**

by Larry Scott - April 24, 2006

Vets' Commission Chair, General Terry Scott wants to study if vets should get VA compensation and Social Security disability at the same time with the aim of reducing benefits. In an unconstitutional move, he asks Congress to interpret its own law so he would have the power to launch study.

The next step in dismantling veterans' benefits could be a payment reduction, known as an offset, for veterans receiving disability compensation and Social Security.

The Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission (VDBC) was established by Public Law 108-136 and signed into being by President Bush in November 2003. The VDBC's charter states they are to study "whether a veteran's disability or death should be compensated" and at what level if any. <More at: [www.vawatchdog.org/milcom/pushtocutvabenefits.htm](http://www.vawatchdog.org/milcom/pushtocutvabenefits.htm)>

## **HOMELESS HEROES**

Paul Rieckhoff | May 04, 2006

The next generation of American Veterans is on its way home. Over 1.3 million American troops have already served in Iraq or Afghanistan, and tens of thousands more will return from combat over the years to come. After these young men and women put away their uniforms, they will still be coping with the consequences of years spent at war. When these conflicts have faded from the headlines, will we, as Americans, continue to honor our yellow-ribbon commitment to "Support the Troops"? Already there are many disturbing signs that we are not prepared to meet that obligation. ... According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, nearly 200,000 American veterans are homeless on any given night, and over 400 of those homeless veterans served in Iraq. <More at: [www.military.com/opinion/0,15202,96237,00.html](http://www.military.com/opinion/0,15202,96237,00.html)>

## TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

### MISSING WWII AIRMEN ARE IDENTIFIED - MAY 8, 2006

The Defense POW/Missing Personnel (DPMO) announced today that two members of a four-man Army Air Forces crew missing in action from World War II have been identified, and are being returned to their families for burial with full military honors.

The four are pilot Capt. Douglas R. Wight of Westfield, N.J.; co-pilot 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Herbert W. Evans of Rapid City S.D.; crew chief Cpl. John W. Hanlon of Arnett, Okla.; and radio operator Pfc. Gerald L. Rutgers, Jr., of Tacoma, Wash. Evans and Rutgers were individually identified, while group remains of all four will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, May 9. On March 27, 1944, a C-46 crewed by these four airmen departed a base in Kunming, China, on route to Sookerating, India, as part of the massive allied re-supply missions over the Himalayan Mountains, referred to as the "Hump." En route one of the crewmen called out for a bearing, suggesting the aircraft was lost. There was no further communication with the crew. The aircraft never reached its destination, and searches during and following World War II failed to locate the crash site. <More at: [www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060508-12991.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060508-12991.html)>

### THEY'RE SO VERY BRAVE

Dr. Gene Bolles - New York Daily News - May 03, 2006

As chief of neurosurgery from November 2001 to February 2004 at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, America's tertiary hospital serving our troops, I have seen the horrors that come with war. The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have claimed the lives of approximately 2,600 young men and women in our armed forces and wounded 20,000. With the third anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom upon us, I am reminded of war's horrors, but also of the unparalleled sacrifice and loyalty of the men and women who serve this nation. ...Most of those who are killed or wounded are under the age of 22. Those who are seriously injured (some with only one extremity remaining, some blinded and severely disfigured) frequently express a strong desire to go back to their units to complete their tour of duty and protect their buddies.

...Our esteemed athletes in the NBA, NFL and NCAA receive medical care and appropriate testing almost immediately upon being injured. Our soldiers and their families deserve no less. If we can spend \$7 billion to \$10 billion dollars a month on a war, we must also afford to help rebuild lives impacted by this war.

<More at: [www.nydailynews.com/news/ideas\\_opinions/v-pfriendly/story/400834p-339598c.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/ideas_opinions/v-pfriendly/story/400834p-339598c.html)>

### NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MOBILIZED AS OF 3 MAY 2006

This week, the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced a decrease in the number of reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Air Force number remained the same. The net collective result is 4,113 fewer reservists mobilized than last week.

At any given time, services may mobilize some units and individuals while demobilizing others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 82,955; Navy Reserve, 4,905; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 7,509; Marine Corps Reserve, 6,473; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 403. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 102,245, including both units and individual augmentees.

[www.defenselink.mil/news/May2006/d20060503nqr.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/May2006/d20060503nqr.pdf)

### OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 10 MAY 2006

#### OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,427
WOUNDED US [Est. No DoD UPDATE SINCE 6 APR]≥	17,869
KILLED UK	109
KILLED OTHER COALITION	111
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	645
KILLED CONTRACTORS	329
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 34,630
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 39,258
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 139,262

#### OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	285
WOUNDED/INJURED US	718
KILLED COALITION	77
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/](http://WWW.MILITARYCITY.COM/2000CASUALTIES/)

## **AFTERTHOUGHTS**

**WHEN WILL WE LEARN THAT WHILE FLAG-BURNING IS A STUPID ACT, IT IS FREE SPEECH AND WE SHOULD DEFEND STUPID SPEECH JUST AS MUCH AS WE DEFEND ALL FORMS OF FREE SPEECH?**

**COME ON US SENATE! START WORRYING ABOUT IMPORTANT THINGS LIKE VETERANS' MEDICAL BENEFITS, AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS!**

### **U.S. SENATE SHOULD FOCUS BEYOND FLAG BURNING**

Janet Walsh - Asbury Park Press - 05/2/06

Once again, the U.S. Senate is debating a constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the American flag. I cannot help but feel weary as policy-makers brace for yet another fight over the extent of freedom of expression.

Flag burning draws widespread outrage and attention. But by making dramatic public appeals to ban it, policy-makers are giving those few perpetrators the attention they crave.

And what would the ban accomplish anyhow? Proponents tout the amendment as a show of support for our troops overseas and our veterans here at home. I see it as meaningless rhetoric that distracts attention from far more critical issues affecting the quality of life for service members and veterans.

I have dedicated my life to providing quality health care for all Americans, especially for our soldiers. What I see is a looming crisis, one far more deserving of congressional attention than a constitutional ban on flag desecration.

Let me be perfectly clear: I do not in any way support flag burning. When I served at the 2nd General Army Hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, during the Vietnam War, it broke my heart to see the American flag burning back home. But as a first lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps, I had an important job to do: to make sure that American soldiers received the best medical care available. And now, 40 years later, I fear those same men and women are no longer being properly cared for.

What I see are policy-makers who are more interested in making headlines with a wedge issue than addressing the needs of those who put their lives on the line to defend this country and the principles it stands for.

For decades, federal funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs has fallen short. The results of last year's Base Realignment and Closure process leave the medical care of thousands of veterans across the country in question. Here in New Jersey, the closure of Fort Monmouth and its Patterson Army Clinic will affect thousands of veterans and military families.

As a new generation of American veterans returns home from combat overseas, we should be grateful for their commitment to our country. We should be showing our appreciation, not using their considerable risks and sacrifices as a platform to advance an empty agenda.

Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., has always been a strong supporter of our nation's — and especially New Jersey's — veterans. I hope as the debate over the flag-burning amendment comes to a head, he will reject this frivolous bickering and instead use the power of his seat to generate bipartisan support for adequate health care for veterans. If there is one thing that can be agreed upon in this age of partisan politics, it is that we owe a great debt to our veterans. The very least our policy-makers can do is band together to repay them with their promised care.

I support neither flag burning nor this constitutional amendment, but what I do support, as an American and a veteran, is the freedom we enjoy. It is that freedom, as well as the respect and care of those who defend it, that defined my military service and the service of thousands of my fellow veterans. Not a flag.

If the Senate truly supports America's veterans, I would rather see them make a real difference and turn their attention to the ongoing struggle for quality health care for veterans instead of this damaging attempt to restrict our rights.

*Janet Walsh, Medford, is a member of Veterans Defending the Bill of Rights, Newburgh, Ind.*

[www.app.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060502/OPINION/605020328/1030](http://www.app.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060502/OPINION/605020328/1030)

## NOTICE

If at any time you cannot open a link in this newsletter to an article or web page that interests you, please let me know at [scook@vuft](mailto:scook@vuft); I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

## VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

We are honored to have General Joseph P. Hoar, USMC Retired, join our Advisory Board. General Hoar's last active duty assignment was as CINC CENTCOM from 1991 to 1994.

### ADVISORY BOARD

GOVERNOR MICHAEL DUKAKIS (FRMR USA)  
EVELYN (PAT) FOOTE, BG USA (RET)  
HON. JOHN GARAMENDI (CA INSURANCE CMSNR)  
D. O. HELMICK, FRMR CMSNR CHP (FRMR CANG)  
JOSEPH P. HOAR, GEN USMC (RET)

ART HICKS, CMSGT USAF (RET)-[TUSKEGEE AIRMAN]  
HON. P. N. (PETE) MCCLOSKEY, COL USMCR (RET)  
HON. WADE SANDERS CAPT USNR (RET) (FRMR DEPUTY  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY)  
HON. JEROME (JERRY) WALDIE (FRMR USA)

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

CHAIR BOB HANDY  
VICE CHAIR SANDY COOK  
SECRETARY DON KATZ  
TREASURER RUSS WEED  
COMMUNICATIONS RIC SCHROEDER  
EVENTS ERIK JENSEN  
MEMBERSHIP RUSS WEED

MATERIALS JAIME RIVERA  
MESSAGE MARTY U'REN  
OUTREACH TOM MULLENS  
AT LARGE JIM COOK  
AT LARGE RON DEXTER  
AT LARGE THOMAS O'SHAUGHNESSY  
NEWSLETTER SANDY COOK

#### Fair Use Notice

This newsletter may contain copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of active-duty military and veterans' issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Are you forwarding this newsletter to others? Please let us know.

Want to join us? Please apply for membership at [www.vuft.org](http://www.vuft.org)

**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