

SOUND OFF!



VOL. VI, NO 8

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.
“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 APRIL 2011

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

THIS WE’LL DEFEND II

Last issue I talked about the Army’s motto, “This We’ll Defend”, and how we veterans swore that oath to defend the Constitution even against domestic enemies.

In the ensuing month I have received a number of responses, as well as a number of outside comments and articles from myriad sources on the meaning of the Constitution, originally and in today’s world.

If I could reproduce all of them here your head would spin trying to sort out the various views of what the Constitution means, and how we should be applying it today.

The comments range from the radical right to the loony left and every shade in between. The difference in the views expressed in these missives staggers the mind. You would be hard-pressed to show that they were reading the same documents.

If you were to read across the whole range of opinions (it was all opinion, no scholarship) you would find that we Americans don’t have a very good idea of what is really in our Constitution. Further, we don’t seem to understand what the founders really did to give it to us, and how they went about it.

Even more than that, many of us seem to believe that the Constitution absolutely and inarguably supports our personal ideological convictions, regardless. In no group was that view more prevalent in these emails than in our fellow veterans.

Why is it important that we veterans study and understand, at least to the level of educated laymen, what the US Constitution means,?

Maybe one answer to that is, “Because our fellow citizens don’t do it!” Maybe the better answer is,

“Because we swore to defend it, therefore we are obliged to understand it, and how it came about.”

Without that latter answer we would have to say that we swore to defend something we knew nothing about, and that is not our way, is it? That just doesn’t do it for you or for me.

The reaction to that article sent me back to the books, and I re-read one book that I first read 40-some years ago, and read another that was new to me, although it is 25 years old.

The first book, Catherine Drinker Bowen’s “Miracle at Philadelphia” is, in the words of Henry Steele Commager, a renowned historian, “The most readable of all accounts of the Philadelphia convention.” It lays out in great but readable detail the workings of the Constitutional Convention from 25 May to 17 September 1787.

The second book is Ralph Ketcham’s “The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates”, which covers some of the same ground but concentrates on the arguments against the Constitution.

When some politician says, “The Founders wanted [*some simple point*]”, you can be fairly sure that he or she hasn’t read much about “the Founders”. The simpler the point they are trying to make, the more likely they are to be either dead wrong or lying.

Had he or she read these two books, and were they presenting the complexity of their issue, then you could probably trust them. One thing for sure, there were no simple answers then and there are none now.

Those “Founders” who either supported or opposed the Constitution did so for varied reasons. Some supported the rights of people, some supported

the rights of property, some supported the rights of states.

Some of those who supported the rights of people often ended up opposing the Constitution because it did not contain a Bill of Rights.

Some who supported the rights of property ended up opposing the Constitution because it did not, in their view, protect the rights of wealth and property sufficiently and might make property subordinate to individual rights.

Those who supported the rights of states operated on the belief that the original Confederation was as “United” as these states should ever be, and were jealous of any powers that would be transferred from the states to the central government.

Some were afraid of an executive that would end up becoming a monarchy. Others were inclined to believe that monarchy wouldn’t be a bad idea and considered offering the kingship to George Washington.

Many were afraid of a legislature that would allow a government, under the influence of “the common people”, to confiscate or overly tax property, while others were afraid of a legislature that would aid entrenched powers to subordinate the people.

Most were afraid of a Supreme Court that would override the laws and the courts of the states.

Both sides were afraid of a loss of freedom of belief. The Catholics of Maryland and the Quakers of Pennsylvania were particularly afraid, but then, there were many Protestants who were afraid either of the “papists” or even of other Protestant denominations, especially of Episcopalians. In the end, freedom of conscience and belief was a strong point for both sides (despite some current arguments to the contrary).

To confuse the issue the “Founders” lined themselves up as: 1) the “Federalists” who were in favor not of a federation but of a unified central government; and, 2) the “anti-Federalists” who were in favor of continuing the original federation. Even the names of their groups didn’t reflect their views.

Every side of the argument cited the “lessons of history” as the rationale for its positions. Each camp took selectively from history going back to Mesopotamia, and the Macedonian and Roman Empires. Each also tended to draw different conclusions from the same data.

Both sides agreed that the Confederation was faulted and needed to be fixed: their answers were

markedly different—the “anti-Federalists” to modify it, and the “Federalists” to change it.

The Federalists took their historical lessons from near British history, showing that not only was it possible to govern widely across the land, but also that central government was the best sort of government to preserve the rights of the people, and to present the nation to the outside world.

The major historical lesson that the anti-Federalists used was from various empires showing that empires tended to be too big to govern. They cited Montesquieu as stating that democracy would only work on a small scale, and that large scale government could only be viable through military-enforced despotism.

If we veterans are to engage in a knowledgeable discussion about the Constitution and its meaning for us today, there are several important points to be derived from a study of this monumental and often confusing chain of events:

1. The “Founders” were all over the map on the issues at stake.
2. The “Founders” often joined different camps on different Constitutional issues.
3. Some of the “Founders” were adamant central government supporters while others were just as avid in their support of decentralized government based on the states.
4. Some of the “Founders” were in favor of a Bill of Rights, but others were strongly in favor of not including it as they believed that the rights didn’t need protection since they were inherent. Others even believed that a statement of rights would cause mischief later as the people got a little too uppity.
5. Some were in favor of a strong Senate, consisting of “the proper sort”, and a weak House consisting of “ordinary people”, with the Senate being the final arbiter on everything.
6. Almost all were against a standing army although they saw a need for a fleet to protect shipping interests.
7. Almost all feared a too strong executive.

Their arguments for and against ratification went on from September 1787 until the final state (RI) ratified the Constitution in May 1790.

The arguments on both sides projected the most dire outcomes if their ideas were not followed. They both proposed the most extreme negative outcomes if

the other side won. The anti-Federalists predicted despotism, while the Federalists predicted anarchy.

Out of all this we ended up with a marvelous Constitution, and one which very quickly (January 1791) adopted a Bill of Rights.

We also end up with our final two lessons from the process, which are:

8. Had there not been a willingness to discuss, differ, argue, and finally to compromise, nothing would have happened and the United States would probably not be the power that it is today.
9. The “Founders” stood behind their agreements, even though that involved concession on some of the issues they were most closely bound to.

Early veterans, through their actions, taught the “Founding Fathers” that it was truly possible to throw off foreign domination and to start a nation.

Perhaps it is now our job to teach today’s politicians how the nation came to be and how they really need to start acting more like the Founding

Fathers in their deliberations and in their ability to compromise and move forward.

Patrick Henry, inarguably a “Founding Father” and the most adamant of the anti-Federalists, had threatened to withdraw himself from the union if the Constitution were approved. When pressed on the issue he nonetheless said that the preservation of the union was essential, even if it could not be as he would wish it, and that he would support the outcome, if reluctantly

That’s compromise of the highest order.

The “Founders”, as they actually were, ought to be the model for today’s politicians.

It’s too bad that they either cannot or will not see that truth, being blinded by their own versions of “truth”.

Aren’t you tired of not only being taken for granted, but of being taken for a dunce?

I am.[Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims “Public List of Practitioners” are members of the court’s bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/. Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: On 12 August 2009 we appeared before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. An article from the LA Times on 24 August summarizes the results so far < <http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24.0.1423297.story>>

.Case Progress to Date:

- 7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court
- 9/25/2007 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss
- 2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction
- 2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing
- 4/21/2008 Trial
- 6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

- 7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals
- 12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed
- 12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs
- 12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs
- 3/4/2009 Appeal will not be subject to Mediation

- 4/6/2009 Requested an extension to reply to the DVA response to our brief
- 4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009
- 5/1/09 Appellants' Reply Brief filed
- 6/11/09 Oral Arguments Scheduled for 12 August 2009
- 8/12/09 Oral arguments
- 9/14/09 Reply on mediation [changed date]
- 9/14/09 No agreement on mediation. 9th Circuit accepts the case.

04/20/11 NTR [The courts move veeerrrry slowly] There is a rumor that we may yet be heard this session. NOTE: There is no first-in-first-out rule in the Court of Appeals, and there is no time constraint on the court.

Our lawyers are very experienced in these matters and say that we cannot prod the court or they will likely just rule against us, so we must be patient.

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/

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

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on our website "Donate" page at www.vuft.org/donate.html. Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method.

P L E A S E D O N A T E !

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

WARNING TO ALL HANDS

I received a call from a veteran in the Los Angeles Area concerning a company known as "NSA Educational Academy," an organization that is offering assistance for veterans filing VA pensions and aid and assistance claims with the VA. They have been holding seminars in numerous American Legion Posts, so is operating under the guise, this is being and has been approved by the American Legion at Department and National level. This is further from the truth and is not endorsed by the American Legion at either the Department or National Level. By giving this impression a veteran assumed them to be they are legitimate (they may be or not) and endorsed by the American Legion even at the post level. They assisted this veteran in filing and mailing his VA claim, but in return required a fee of \$299 and a signed contract. This veteran reluctantly agreed and made out his check to "Discount Legal Services," which he was instructed to. He later was called and asked for additional fee of roughly \$300 more and told he was contractually obligated to pay. This veteran contacted our office, which in turn we contacted our National Organization and "National Veteran Legal Services Program," affiliated with the American legion in Washington DC and advised the veteran to cut off all contact. The VA Inspector General has been notified and is looking into this, as well as NVLSP.

Please be careful out there. Protect each other. ~ Scott F. McKee, Department Service Officer, American Legion California

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

LAWMAKERS BLAST NAVY OVER LEJEUNE WATER

Mclatchy -Tribune News Service - April 17, 2011

WASHINGTON -- Five members of Congress on Friday called the Department of the Navy to task - again - for what they say is an apparent resistance to keeping veterans informed about past water contamination at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

In a tartly worded letter to the Navy, Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida, Sens. Kay Hagan and Richard Burr and Rep. Brad Miller of North Carolina, and Rep. John Dingell of Michigan said the military continues to mislead the public about a high-profile scientific report on the contamination. They said that the Navy hasn't yet agreed to a deal that would allow federal scientists to review its public relations material. And, they said, the Navy appears reluctant to lead veterans and their family members to recent, updated science about the contamination. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/lawmakers-blast-navy-over-lejeune-water.html>

NEW BILLS COULD IMPACT MILITARY LIFE

April 18, 2011

Several recently proposed bills could impact important aspects of military life, like military pay, retirement benefits, spouse employment and GI Bill benefits. For example, House bill HR 1297 would ensure military pay is safe in case of future government shutdowns. While Senate bill S.745 would ensure veteran students would not lose GI Bill benefits during scheduled school breaks and HR 1451 would protect current student veterans from the financial impact of GI Bill 2.0. In addition, some FY2012 budget proposals include cuts which could result in TRICARE Prime premium and fee increases, limits on access to the VA health care system for certain vets, and a possible military pay freeze. Let your voice be heard. Contact your elected officials and tell them how you feel about these vital issues. www.military.com/military-report/new-bills-could-impact-military-life

THIS MUST BE MORE OF THAT “SHARED SACRIFICE” CRAP

HARDSHIP PAY AUTHORIZED FOR SOME CIVILIANS, BUT NOT MILITARY, IN JAPAN

Travis J. Tritten - Stars and Stripes - April 1, 2011

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Federal civilian workers in some areas of Japan began receiving extra pay this week as compensation for hardship following the country’s natural disaster and nuclear crisis, even though some of those regions are hundreds of miles from the devastation.

Additionally, the hardship pay does not extend to U.S. military members or Department of Defense civilians working at U.S. military bases where voluntary evacuations are ongoing due to radiation fears, according to U.S. Forces Japan officials.

<More at: www.stripes.com/news/hardship-pay-authorized-for-some-civilians-but-not-military-in-japan-1.139714>

GERMAN FAMILY WANTS GIS TO KNOW ABOUT ESCHENBACH HOSPITAL LAWSUIT

Marcus Kloeckner and Seth Robson - Stars and Stripes - April 15, 2011

GRAFENWÖHR, Germany — A recent court victory is leading a German family to look for the parents of American children born at Eschenbach Hospital who might also be victims of dangerous practices by staff and structural negligence between 1987 and 2004.

Two doctors were convicted of gross negligence in medical treatment and a midwife was convicted of assault and illegal use of painkillers in the March 25 verdict. The hospital was found guilty of gross organizational errors.

As an indication of just how many U.S. births there were, the newspaper Der Neue Tag reported that 40 percent of the 10,000 children born between 1968 and 2004 at Eschenbach Hospital were American. The hospital served soldiers and families stationed at Grafenwöhr, Hohenfels and Vilseck as well as surrounding facilities.

<More at: www.stripes.com/news/german-family-wants-gis-to-know-about-eschenbach-hospital-lawsuit-1.141168>

TELL ME AGAIN WHY WE ARE STILL THERE?

RISING NUMBER OF COALITION TROOP DEATHS COMING AT HANDS OF AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES

Nancy Montgomery and Bill Murphy Jr. - Stars and Stripes - April 17, 2011

The murders on Saturday of five NATO soldiers by a Taliban suicide bomber who enlisted as an Afghan National Army soldier marked the latest in a rising toll of coalition troop deaths at the hands of Afghan security forces they are attempting to train.

Since January, 13 troops with the International Security Assistance Force have been killed when Afghan police, soldiers or security guards — or insurgents who infiltrated their ranks — attacked coalition forces. These types of killings have accounted for the deaths of at least 38 coalition personnel since 2009, according to a Stars and Stripes review, constituting roughly 3 percent of the hostile fire deaths among troops during that time.

By comparison, 27 troops were killed by mortar or indirect fire attacks launched by insurgents during that same time period, according to the independent website icasualties.org.

Surprisingly, the killers are not usually Taliban sleeper agents or impostors. They often appear to be regular Afghan troops who start shooting after some dispute with coalition troops, according to the NATO command in charge of training Afghan security forces. <More at: www.stripes.com/rising-number-of-coalition-troop-deaths-coming-at-hands-of-afghan-security-forces-1.141313>

WHEN CORPORATIONS DO SOME GOOD, THEY DESERVE PRAISE

SMITH & WESSON PUTTING VETERANS BACK TO WORK

Chris Stewart - April 14, 2011

Since last year Air Force Veteran John Jasinski has been without work. "It's tough out there, to go to a place to apply. So many times you see you could be one of a thousand sometimes," Jasinski said.

But next week all of that will change. "It's really just a great opportunity as a new career, that's what I'm seeing it as," Jasinski said.

Jasinski and more than 10 other veterans graduated Thursday from Mobile Outreach Skills Training ,or MOST, at Smith & Wesson. The program aims to give veterans a new career in manufacturing.

"We take people who have little or no background in the process and we have a fast track training program that allows them to gather and learn a lot of material in a short period of time," Ted Bauer of Mass. Workforce Development said.

Over the course of two weeks the veterans learned all the skills they need to get a jump start at Smith & Wesson. For many veterans the transition from being in the military to being a civilian can be a challenge. Workforce development officials say a veteran's skills are a perfect fit for the private sector.

"The military training brings to them some discipline, however this particular skill is very special and they have the discipline and wherewithal to very quickly adapt and adjust," Bauer said.

<More at: www.cbs3springfield.com/news/local/Smith--Wesson-Putting-Veterans-Back-to-Work-119874004.html>

NORTHROP GRUMMAN FOUNDATION DONATES \$5 MILLION TO USO WOUNDED WARRIORS OPERATION ENDURING CARE INITIATIVE

Arlington, VA. (April 11, 2011) – The Northrop Grumman Foundation is donating \$5 million as the lead donor for the new Wounded Warrior and Family Center on the grounds of Fort Belvoir in Virginia. This is the largest single gift to the USO in the 70-year history of the organization.

The new center will support wounded warriors at the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital and the Warrior Transition Unit. During the transition from inpatient to outpatient care, which can take months, even years, the center will provide wounded troops and their families with tangible and intangible support. Families will have access to a setting that offers relief and understanding amid the rigors of rehabilitation and reintegration as well as the practical elements of day-to-day living, a bastion of comfort on the march out of disability. The center at Fort Belvoir will be a high-end, 25,000 square foot facility where wounded troops and their families can find respite and renewal in "home away from home" surroundings. The center will be operated by the USO of Metropolitan Washington.

<More at: www.cisionwire.com/uso-media-room/northrop-grumman-foundation-donates--5-million-to-uso--wounded-warriors-operation-enduring-care-initiative106980>

SEARS HOLDINGS JOINS FORCES WITH FIRST LADY MICHELLE

4/16/11

Sears Holdings, along with First Lady Michelle Obama, Dr. Jill Biden and Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis plan to formally announce an initiative to identify and provide more career opportunities for military associates and their families during an intimate scheduled for later this evening at the Sears Distribution Center in Columbus, Ohio.

The event offers Mrs. Obama, Dr. Biden and Ms. Solis the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the military personnel and their families employed at this Sears location. The visit will serve to illustrate the women's commitment to motivating Americans everywhere, from all walks of life, to support the brave men and women who sacrifice so much for our country and their families. <More at: http://pr-usa.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=694099&Itemid=30>

THAT GOES FOR THE VA ALSO

IMPRESSIVE RESULTS: MEDICAL COMMUNITY SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO VA'S WORK FIGHTING INFECTIONS

April 17, 2011

Over the past few years, Veterans Affairs hospitals across the country have taken an aggressive approach to combating potentially deadly infections. As The New York Times reported Wednesday, when patients come in, they are screened for infection. Those who test positive for the notorious methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, bacterium, which is difficult to treat, are isolated. Anyone working with those patients is required to wear gloves and gowns, and other precautions are taken.

A study of 153 VA hospitals, published last week in The New England Journal of Medicine, showed the effort was paying off — there was a 62 percent drop in the rate of MRSA infections in the hospitals' intensive care units over a 32-month period. Other areas of the hospitals showed a 45 percent drop during the same period.

<More at: www.lasvegassun.com/news/2011/apr/17/impressive-results/>

\$80B PER YEAR FOR MILITARY R&D AND THIS IS WHAT WE GET?

JIEDDO: THE MANHATTAN PROJECT THAT BOMBED

Peter Cary and Nancy Youssef - March 27, 2011

As the invasion of Iraq turned into an occupation, a new and deadly threat to U.S. troops emerged, one for which the U.S. was ill prepared: the roadside bomb.

So in February 2006, with casualties mounting, the Pentagon responded by creating a new agency designed to attack the problem by harnessing the full might of America's technology community. The new organization was dubbed the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization, or JIEDDO, and a retired four-star general was tasked to run it.

The launch of JIEDDO eventually turned what had been a 12-person Army anti-homemade bomb task force into a 1,900 person behemoth with nearly \$21 billion to spend.

Yet after five years of work, hundreds of projects, and a blizzard of cash paid to some of America's biggest defense contractors, JIEDDO has not found a high-tech way to detect or defeat these so-called Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) from a safe distance. In fact, the rate at which soldiers are able to find IEDs before they explode has remained mostly steady, at roughly 50 percent, since JIEDDO was formed. <More at: www.publicintegrity.org/articles/entry/3068/>

RIFLE-STOPPING HELMET FAILS TESTS

Christian Lowe - Military.com - March 18, 2011

The top general at Marine Corps Systems Command told lawmakers March 17 that a new combat helmet designed to stop some high-caliber rifle rounds failed to meet specifications during recent ballistic tests.

Brigadier Gen. Frank Kelley told members of the House Armed Services Committee's Air and Land Forces panel that engineers conducting so-called "first article tests" of the Enhanced Combat Helmet have "noticed ... some different performance that we noticed in [developmental testing]." <More at: www.military.com/news/article/rifle-stopping-helmet-fails-tests.html>

DATA SPUR CHANGES IN VA CARE

Thomas M. Burton – 4/17/11

Hospitals serving U.S. military veterans are moving fast to improve care after the government opened a trove of performance data—including surgical death rates—to the public. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in November started posting online comparisons of the nation's 152 VA hospitals based on patient outcomes: essentially, how likely patients are to survive a visit without complications at one hospital compared with the rest. This unusually comprehensive sort of consumer information on medical outcomes remains largely hidden from the tens of millions of Americans outside the VA system, including many of those in the federal Medicare system.

... The VA's [November data release](#) was the first version and will be made more user-friendly, Dr. Duncan says.

<More at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703512404576208812390820304.html>>

ARMY CHANGES ENLISTMENT AGE

Rod Powers - About.com Guide - April 7, 2011

After months of great recruiting success, the Army has lowered the age limit for active duty and Reserve enlistment to age 34. Several months ago, the Army raised its enlisted recruiting age to age 42 to help boost sagging recruiting numbers. However, with the now sagging economy, the Army has had no problem meeting their recruiting goals for the past several months, and therefore have reverted to the previous age limits. Under this policy, new recruits must be able to ship out to basic training before reaching the age of 35. <http://usmilitary.about.com/b/2011/04/07/army-changes-enlistment-age.htm>

TO THE COLORS – GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
Every Sunday	1300-1600	Wilson & San Vicente Blvds. NE Corner, Los Angeles, CA	Save Our Veterans Land	Veterans Revolution	
4/28	5/1	Davidson Park Caldwell TX	The Wall That Heals	VFW Post 4458	
4/29		Wilmington NC	Resource Fair	Bill Ebersbach	910-524-0077
4/29		St. Cloud MN	Resource Fair	Nick Johnston	320-253-6212
4/29		Brentwood NY	Resource Fair	David Rivera	631-853-8387
4/29		Las Vegas NV	Resource Fair	Gregory Abernathy	702-636-3000
4/30		Columbus GA	Resource Fair	A. Harrison	706-593-3393
5/6		Pahrump NV	Resource Fair	Gregory Abernathy	702-636-3000
5/8-5/15		The Center for Rural Development Somerset KY	The Wall That Heals	The Center for Rural Development	
5/13-5/14		Jacksonville FL	Resource Fair	Travis Sims	904-630-3680
5/19-5/22		7 Garoner St. East Windsor, CT	The Wall That Heals	American Legion	

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

WE NEED A CLOSER LOOK AT WOMEN VETS' UNIQUE PROBLEMS

FEMALE VETERAN FIGHTS AN INVISIBLE INJURY

Faye Fiore - Los Angeles Times - April 9, 2011

Angel Harris returned from Afghanistan eight years ago pregnant and — like thousands of other female veterans — with a case of PTSD, a disorder that took six years to diagnose. The military has only recently begun to offer women the same PTSD benefits as men.

The Bullfrog Brewery is crowded for lunch and tables are scarce, but former Army Sgt. Angel Harris finds one where she can sit with her back to a wall and still see out a window. She isn't sure what she's watching for. A sniper maybe, or an ambush.

This is downtown Williamsport — the Appalachian hamlet where Little League was born — not the sort of place where people wait around for something awful to happen. But that's the way Harris has viewed the world since she returned from Afghanistan eight years ago carrying her unborn son and a case of PTSD.

The baby was easy to figure out. A home pregnancy test administered in a camp latrine saw to that. The post-traumatic stress disorder took more than six years to diagnose. Women are not permitted to serve in direct ground combat in the U.S. armed forces, so by military reasoning, they weren't likely to suffer from combat-related trauma.

Except they do. <More at: <http://latimes.com/health/la-na-ptsd-women-20110409.0.4886242.story>>

GIVING FEMALE VETERANS A CHANCE TO SHARE THEIR PAIN

Alexandra Zavis - Times Staff Writer - April 10, 2011

The war veterans gathered amid the tranquil gardens and arched walkways of the Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside. In a circle, they sat together, more than 50 women in all. Some laughed and chatted as they settled in chairs or propped themselves up on the floor of an adobe-walled hall. Others glanced around, uncertain what to expect from a weekend retreat. Several commented that it was the first time they had been in a room with so many women.

"I feel like I'm in a Lamaze group," Kristine Wise, a 41-year-old former soldier from Oceanside, said with a chuckle.

For years, the women concealed their femininity beneath tough military garb. Feelings were often bottled up because they could be seen as signs of weakness. <More at: <http://latimes.com/news/local/la-me-veterans-women-20110410.0.4965825.story>>

THERE'S NO QUICK FIX FOR VETERANS

Maggie Martin – 4/13

It has been nearly five years since I left the Army and still my time in the service is fresh in my mind. I think about my deployments every single day without fail. I have friends and family, responsibilities and passions that keep me moving, but the time I spent in the Army and in Iraq are what continue to define me.

Many current and former service members feel the same way. The act of participating in war casts a shadow over everything else in life. Facing high stress and danger for so long makes it tremendously difficult to leave the military and rejoin civilian society. Day-to-day concerns seem trivial compared to the life or death urgency of military situations. When I first came home, I would become furious at how easily everyone in this country can carry on virtually ignoring the fact that we are at war.

I worked as a server as I used my GI Bill benefits to earn a bachelor's degree in English Communication, but after graduating with honors, I could not find a job in my field. After a year of looking for meaningful employment, I enrolled in graduate school largely out of fear that my degree would become obsolete before I could even get a shot at any real work experience. The fact that women veterans are among the highest unemployed populations leaves me with questions about whether my service is continuing to hurt me in ways I cannot even see.

I've struggled with processing my experiences as a woman in the military. Five years later, I am just beginning to seek help for Military Sexual Trauma (MST), a rape that I could not admit to myself let alone report to authorities. My acquiescence and perpetuation of victim blaming, so rampant in the military, kept me in denial about what I had suffered. I think often of women I knew in similar situations who I would not reach out to for fear of casting myself in the lot of weak women -- for that, I am full of regret. <More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/maggie-martin/no-quick-fix-for-veterans_b_848421.html>

INSTEAD OF HELPING, TRUSTEE PROGRAM IS HURTING VETERANS, FAMILIES SAY

John Schwartz - New York Times - April 7, 2011

LANCASTER, Tex. — During the Korean War, Billy Brown faced enemy bullets, starvation and bitter cold. Now the benefits that he earned for his sacrifice have been tied up by the Department of Veterans Affairs, which in 2009 diverted his payments to trustees who have taken control not only of those funds, but of his life savings of some \$100,000 as well.

Richard Wortham, Mr. Brown's son, gained power of attorney for his father four years before the department stepped in, and found out about his father's new financial minder only when he tried to withdraw money from the bank. "They said we no longer had access to his money — we could only get it from the fiduciary," Mr. Wortham said.

What began as a broad effort to safeguard ailing veterans and their families from financial loss and abuse has turned into what lawyers and veterans' advocates call a mismanaged and poorly regulated bureaucracy that not only fails to respond to veterans' needs but in some cases creates new problems. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2011/04/08/us/08vets.html>

MISCOMMUNICATION HINDERS VETS' CARE, STUDY FINDS

Gregg Zoroya - USA TODAY - 3/28/11

A program to help coordinate life-long care for the most severely wounded veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars may not be getting to all the people who need it because of poor communication between the Pentagon and the Department of Veterans Affairs, says a government study released Wednesday. The Pentagon and Department of Veterans Affairs say efforts will improve the coordination of care for severely wounded veterans. Eligible veterans are not easily identified because the Pentagon and VA have no specific classification for "severely wounded, ill or injured" servicemembers, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study says. <More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/2011-03-23-veterans_N.htm>

MISTAKE MAY SHORTCHANGE WOUNDED VETS

Carl Prine - Pittsburgh Tribune-Review - April 07, 2011

For more than five years, thousands of wounded and injured military reservists and National Guard troops nationwide might have lost medical benefits because of a Pentagon mistake, according to an investigation by Sen. Ron Wyden. In a letter sent on Wednesday to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, the Oregon Democrat said that many wounded troops returning from Afghanistan and Iraq who ended up in Warrior Transition Units at military bases or in community-based programs near their homes lost up to six months of medical coverage that's provided to them under a 2005 law.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/mistake-may-shortchange-wounded-vets.html>

REPORT: VET ON DEATH BED EJECTED BY VA

Bill Sizemore - The Virginian-Pilot - April 1, 2011

HAMPTON -- The Hampton VA Medical Center inappropriately discharged a terminally ill veteran from its emergency room and failed to provide him hospice care requested by his wife, a federal investigation has found.

Investigators from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Inspector General found that staff members at the Hampton center were unaware of a VA policy requiring that end-of-life care be provided when veterans and their families ask for it. The investigators' report, issued Wednesday, came in response to a confidential complaint about the treatment of the veteran, a man in his 50s, who came to the center in August ill with lung cancer that had spread to the brain.

Over three successive visits to the emergency room, the man's condition steadily deteriorated. By the third visit, he was weak, confused, incontinent and required help from VA staff to get out of his car.

His wife told the staff she was having difficulty managing him and could no longer care for him at home.

Nevertheless, the emergency room doctor discharged him, saying he did not meet the hospital's criteria for acute-care admission. When his wife asked about hospice care -- which focuses on allowing patients to die with dignity, pain-free -- she was told no hospice beds were available. <More at: <http://hamptonroads.com/2011/03/report-vet-death-bed-ejected-hampton-va>>

BUDGET PANEL EYES END TO VA CARE FOR 1.3 MILLION VETS

Tom Philpott - April 07, 2011

The House Budget Committee, chaired by Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), has told a veterans' group it is studying a plan to save \$6 billion annually in VA health care costs by cancelling enrollment of any veteran who doesn't have a service-related medical condition and is not poor.

Committee Republicans, searching for ways to curb federal deficits and rein in galloping VA costs, are targeting 1.3 million veterans who claim priority group 7 or 8 status and have access to VA care.

Priority group 8 veterans have no service-connected disabilities and annual incomes, or net worth, that exceed VA means-test thresholds and VA "geographic income" thresholds, which are set by family size.

Priority Group 7 veterans also have no service-connected disabilities and their incomes are above the means-test thresholds. But their incomes or net worth fall below the geographic index. In other words, because of where they live, in high cost areas, they likely struggle financially. <More at: <http://progress-index.com/news/budget-panel-eyes-end-to-va-care-for-1-3-million-vets-1.1130975#axzz1K6TJBBrX>>

BACKLOG BURIES VETERANS' CLAIMS

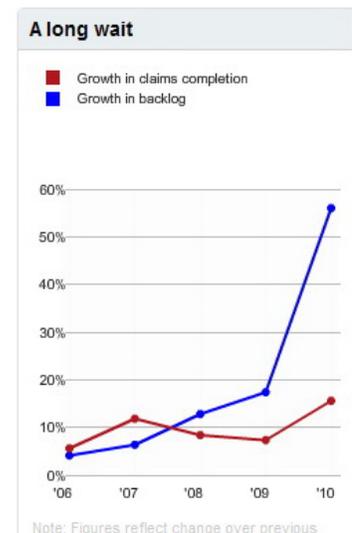
Gregg Zoroya - USA TODAY- 6 April 2011

WASHINGTON — The number of veterans' disability claims taking more than four months to complete has doubled, prompting criticism from veterans and Congress that the Department of Veterans Affairs failed to prepare for a rise in cases it knew was coming.

"Without question, I believe that the VA disability claims system is broken," Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., chairwoman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, said Wednesday.

The number of claims that take more than 125 days to decide has gone from 200,000 a year ago to 450,000 today, according to administration budget documents. As a result, veterans must wait even longer to receive payments for disabilities.

<More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/2011-04-07-1Abacklog07_ST_N.htm>



HALF THE AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ VETERANS TREATED BY VA RECEIVE MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Bob Brewin – 3/22/11

Slightly more than half of all Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans treated by the Veterans Affairs Department received care for mental health problems, roughly four times the rate of the general population, according to statistics compiled by the advocacy group Veterans for Common Sense based on data obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. The data show that among the 625,834 Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans enrolled in the VA health care system as of December 2010, 313,670 were treated for mental health conditions. <More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20110322_2917.php?oref=rss?zone=NGhealthit>

AFTERSHOCK: THE TICKING TIME BOMB OF SOLDIERS' TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES

T. Christian Miller and Daniel Zwerdling – ProPublica - March 27, 2011

MINOT, ND -- At 8:20 p.m. on Sept. 21, 2010, Iraq veteran Brock Savelkoul decided it was time to die. He lurched from his black Tacoma pickup truck, gripping a 9-mm pistol. In front of him, a half dozen law enforcement officers crouched behind patrol cars with their weapons drawn. They had surrounded him on a muddy red road after an hour-long chase that reached speeds of 105 miles per hour. Savelkoul stared at the ring of men and women before ducking into the cab of his truck. He cranked up the radio. A country song about whiskey and cigarettes wafted out across an endless sprawl of North Dakota farmland, stubbled from the recent harvest. Sleet was falling, chilling the air. Savelkoul, 29, walked slowly toward the officers. He gestured wildly with his gun. "Go ahead, shoot me! ... Please, shoot me," he yelled, his face illuminated in a chiaroscuro of blazing spotlights and the deepening darkness. "Do it. Pull it. Do I have to point my gun at you to ... do it?"

<More at: www.alternet.org/story/150391/>

THE PENTAGON'S ACHILLES' HEEL

Lawrence Korb - March 10, 2011

The Pentagon currently spends more than \$50 billion — about 10% of its base budget — on healthcare, an almost 300% increase over the last decade. These costs are projected to jump to \$65 billion by fiscal year 2015. To put this in perspective, the department will spend more on healthcare this fiscal year than on the war in Iraq and will probably spend more on healthcare in 2015 than on the conflict in Afghanistan.

It is not surprising that Pentagon leaders have complained that healthcare costs are "eating the Defense Department alive." Leaders from both parties agree. But Congress has been loath to take action for fear of appearing to break faith with the nation's troops. <More at: www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-korb-militaryretirees-20110310.0.6925055.story>

MEN TOO

THE MILITARY'S SECRET SHAME

Jesse Ellison - April 03, 2011

When men in the military rape other men in the ranks, no one wants to talk about it. Why the sexual assault of males in the service is finally being confronted.

Greg Jeloudov was 35 and new to America when he decided to join the Army. Like most soldiers, he was driven by both patriotism for his adopted homeland and the pragmatic notion that the military could be a first step in a career that would enable him to provide for his new family. Instead, Jeloudov arrived at Fort Benning, Ga., for basic training in May 2009, in the middle of the economic crisis and rising xenophobia. The soldiers in his unit, responding to his Russian accent and New York City address, called him a "champagne socialist" and a "commie faggot." He was, he told NEWSWEEK, "in the middle of the viper's pit." Less than two weeks after arriving on base, he was gang-raped in the barracks by men who said they were showing him who was in charge of the United States. When he reported the attack to unit commanders, he says they told him, "It must have been your fault. You must have provoked them." <More at: www.newsweek.com/2011/04/03/the-military-s-secret-shame.html>

SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE LAUNCHED FOR TROOPS

Kevin Baron - April 15, 2011

WASHINGTON – Still struggling with sexual assaults in the military – more than 3,000 reported cases last year – the Pentagon is launching a global 24-hour hotline for victims seeking help, advice or information.

Troops will be able to access crisis support services, called Safe Helpline, through a phone call, text or online.

... To contact Safe Helpline, call 877-995-5247; text 55-247 (inside the U.S.) or 202-470-5546 (outside the U.S.); or visit www.SafeHelpline.org <More at: www.stripes.com/blogs/stripes-central/stripes-central-1.8040/sexual-assault-hotline-launched-for-troops-1.141166>

OUT OF WAR, OUT OF LUCK: FOR VETERANS, SKILLS LEARNED IN SERVICE DON'T TRANSLATE TO EMPLOYMENT

Lila Shapiro and Laura Bassett – 4/13/11

WASHINGTON -- When Eric Smith, 26, returned home after his second tour in Iraq serving as a Navy medic, he didn't expect to have a difficult time finding work. While on tour, Smith had worked as a physician's assistant in the intensive care unit (ICU), caring for patients undergoing everything from cancer to recent brain surgery. At times, he served on the front lines treating infections. He never thought the expertise he had developed in the field wouldn't amount to a job back home -- but when he returned he found that he couldn't get a job in medicine without the right certifications.

"They beat it into your head, that you're a veteran, [employers] want you, they know about your dependability and your training, blah blah blah," Smith said. "That proved not to be the case. I got out in August 2008, and in September 2008 there was a big economic downturn and that changed everything. It really became: what do you have off the bat, are you able to come in and just work and do you have all the necessary certifications?"

<More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/13/out-of-war-veterans-unemployment_n_848898.html>

DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY REACHES OUT TO VETERANS

FORT BELVOIR, Va -, April 11, 2011 -PRNewswire-USNewswire/ --

Veterans looking for their first federal job can face a sometimes daunting process, but the Defense Logistics Agency has multiple approaches available for them to find a way to continue serving.

The Defense Logistics Agency has more than 8,700 veterans among its civilian employees and hired more than 1,300 of them in 2010 alone. Hettie Holmes-Carter, program manager for corporate recruitment in DLA Human Resources' Human Capital Program Development Branch, said veterans' experience and their innate understanding of what the agency does makes them attractive recruits. <More at: www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/defense-logistics-agency-reaches-out-to-veterans-119618879.html>

TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

Arielle Levin Becker - April 18, 2011

On a visit to a Vermont homeless shelter for veterans, Maj. L. Tammy Duckworth met a man who lived there with his wife and two young children. She asked if he was looking for a job.

No, he told her. He was a member of the Vermont National Guard, and he was getting ready to deploy. And he was excited, she said: His family could stay in the shelter while he was deployed and save up his pay so they could have a home when he got back. <More at: www.ctmirror.org/story/12286/homeless-veterans>

TRICARE YOUNG ADULT PROGRAM: COMING SOON

March 30, 2011 No. 11-19

FALLS CHURCH, Va – Qualified TRICARE dependents up to age 26 can soon purchase TRICARE coverage on a month-to-month basis. To qualify to purchase TRICARE Young Adult (TYA) coverage, dependents must be under 26, unmarried and not eligible for their own employer-sponsor health coverage.

TYA will initially offer a premium-based TRICARE Standard benefit with a premium-based TRICARE Prime benefit phased in later this year. Eligible family members who receive health care services between Jan. 1, 2011 and when the program is implemented can purchase TYA coverage retroactively to Jan. 1, 2011. Beneficiaries should save their receipts.

Premium costs will be announced prior to start of enrollment later this spring. Once premiums are determined, TYA-eligible beneficiaries should explore all of their health care coverage options to choose a plan that makes sense for them. For more information about TYA visit www.tricare.mil/tya. To stay up to date about all TYA news, go to www.tricare.mil/subscriptions to sign up for TYA e-mail alerts and other updates from TRICARE. <http://www.tricare.mil/mediacenter/news.aspx?fid=700>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2011

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,923 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,438/21
WOUNDED US [2/28/11]	31,938/111
OTHER US CASUALTIES [2/28/11]	40,445/899
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [2/28/11]	223/1
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [3/21/11]	≥ 109,359–1,421,933
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (3,452 DAYS)

KILLED US	1508
WOUNDED US [2/28/11]	10,468
OTHER CASUALTIES US [2/28/11]	12,674
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [2/28/11]	57
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED COALITION	865
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010)	≥ 8,813
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$780,485,122,798
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$388,211,484,326

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

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. ** Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF MARCH 15, 2011

This week the Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Army and Marine Corps announced an increase. The net collective result is 17 more reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 67,595; Navy Reserve, 5,921; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 9,589; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,110, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 797. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 89,012, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found on line at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20110315ngr.pdf>.

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

HEROIC BOMB, ATTACK DOG 'VALDO' SAVES 4 COALITION LIVES

Tech. Sgt. Kevin Wallace - ISAF Regional Command West - 04.16.2011

HERAT, Afghanistan – Petty Officer 1st Class Valdo is a Navy military working dog and he's trained to smell explosives. Though Valdo is a veteran at bomb and improvised explosive device detection, the 7-year-old patrol dog's abilities were tested on an April 3 combat foot patrol north of the Bala Murghab security bubble in Badghis province, Afghanistan.

Red Platoon, Bulldog Troop, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment scouts from Fort Carson, Colo., ventured further than coalition forces ever had before on the mission, and plotted fighting positions, and to anticipate possible enemy location. Valdo's role was to smell out mines, IEDs or booby traps. He served honorably.

... Red Platoon came under a sustained attack the following morning, and Valdo was injured by a rocket propelled grenade, which breached Red Platoon's fighting position and landed directly behind him. Valdo was seriously injured in the blast. He absorbed most of the grenade's shrapnel, which possibly saved the lives of for other nearby servicemembers. <More at: www.dvidshub.net/news/printable/68847>

NO MORE SSNS ON DEFENSE ID CARDS

Bob Brewin 04/01/11 05:16 pm ET

When the current crop of Defense Department ID cards start to expire this June, they will be replaced with new ones that no longer contain a Social Security number as an identifier.

Air Force Maj. Monica Matoush, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said the SSN will be replaced by a new, unique 10-digit Defense ID number, and this shift will help reduce identity theft.

This is a real back-to-the-future concept as both my father, a veteran of The Big One, and I, when I served in the Marine Corps in the 1960s, had serial numbers, not Social Security numbers, as identifiers.

Maybe this is the beginning of the end of the use of SSNs as de facto national ID numbers.

http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2011/04/no_more_ssns_on_defense_id_cards.php?zone=NGwhatsbrewin

UNDER JIMMY CARTER WE COULDN'T WEAR IT IN WASHINGTON DC

US TROOPS IN GERMANY BANNED FROM WEARING UNIFORM IN PUBLIC

The Telegraph - 25 March 2011

American troops serving in Germany have been banned from wearing uniform in public following the shooting dead of two US servicemen at Frankfurt airport.

A directive issued by US European Command "forbids the wearing of uniforms between duty and domicile, short convenience stops, conduct of physical fitness, travel between installations and off-post meetings", according to Stars and Stripes, a newspaper for the US armed forces. The paper added that local commanders have the freedom to impose harsher bans at their discretion.

<More at: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/8406938/US-troops-in-Germany-banned-from-wearing-uniform-in-public.html>

JUST FOR FUN ~ CHECK OUT THIS VET WHO STILL HAS IT

86-YO SNIPER STILL HAS PERFECT AIM

Mar 07, 2011 by Video Blogger

Ted Gundy gets awarded his black cap, then shows why he deserves the highest of honors.

www.military.com/video/specialties-and-personnel/snipers/86-yo-sniper-still-has-perfect-aim/817446767001/

PRICE OF GAS AROUND THE WORLD [Thanks to Michael Hollenbeck]

Prices are quoted in US dollars per gallon for regular unleaded as of March 2011

Oslo, Norway \$6.82

Hong Kong \$6.25

Brussels, Belgium \$6.16

London, UK \$5.96

Rome, Italy \$5.80

Canada \$5.36

Tokyo, Japan \$5.25

... YOU'RE GONNA LOVE THIS

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia \$0.09

Kuwait \$0.08

Sao Paulo , Brazil \$4.42

New Delhi, India \$3.71

Sidney, Australia \$3.42

Johannesburg , South Africa \$3.39

Mexico City \$2.22

Buenos Aires, Argentina \$2.09

Caracas, Venezuela \$0.12

Gee, if only the U.S. was an oil producing nation..... Hey, wait a minute!!! we are

ARMY VETERAN RETURNING TO AFGHANISTAN WINS \$250,000

Ty Tagami - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution - April 15, 2011

An Army veteran from Fayetteville won a quarter million dollars in the Georgia Lottery days before his return to Afghanistan.

Gregg Curry, a father of three and a master sergeant with the Third U.S. Army Forces Central Command, bought a winning Cool Cash ticket while stopping to buy a bottle of water with his wife, Mary, lottery officials said Friday.

<More at" <http://www.ajc.com/news/army-veteran-returning-to-911736.html>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

IF YOU'RE A VETERAN IN NEED, WHERE DO YOU TURN FOR HELP?

Joshua Kors - Investigative Reporter - The Nation - 4/12/11

One of the saddest facts about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that so many soldiers leave the battlefield with one question: where do I go for help? Most soldiers do not know who to call. I know this because for the last four years, many have been calling me.

Day and night my cell phone lights up with another unknown number, another soldier in crisis reaching out for help. A soldier with shrapnel embedded in his skin who can't convince the military that he is wounded and in need of medical care. A female soldier about to be discharged for reporting sexual harassment. A young vet growing ill as his case creeps through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

... If you're a veteran, [click here](#) and download this list of organizations offering assistance. If you know a military family, forward the list to them. <More at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joshua-kors/if-youre-a-veteran-in-nee_b_847306.html>

DEADLINE FOR RETROACTIVE STOP LOSS SPECIAL PAY EXTENDED ~ AGAIN

April 20, 2011

The deadline for eligible service members, veterans and their beneficiaries to apply for Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay (RSLSP) has been extended to Oct. 21, 2011, allowing those eligible more time to apply for the benefits they've earned under the program guidelines.

The deadline extension is included in Continuing Resolution H.R. 1473, signed by President Obama April 15, 2011, providing funding for federal government operations through Oct. 21, 2011.

The RSLSP was established to compensate for the hardships military members encountered when their service was involuntarily extended under Stop Loss Authority between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009. Eligible members or their beneficiaries may submit a claim to their respective military service in order to receive the benefit of \$500 for each full or partial month served in a Stop Loss status.

When RSLSP began on Oct. 21, 2009, the services estimated 145,000 service members, veterans and beneficiaries were eligible for this benefit. Because the majority of those eligible had separated from the military, the services have engaged in extensive and persistent outreach efforts over the past 18 months. Outreach efforts including direct mail and engaging military and veteran service organizations, social networks and media outlets, will continue through Oct. 21, 2011. To apply, or for more information on RSLSP, including submission requirements and service-specific links, go to www.defense.gov/stoploss

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 <mailto:scook@vuft.org>

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

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