

SOUND OFF!



VOL. I, NO 10 THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

10 DECEMBER 2005

NOTICE: We try to keep this newsletter to eight pages. The news we include here is about those subjects that are not covered well elsewhere, or are covered so lightly that no lingering impression is made on the reading public. For this issue there was too much to keep within our limit. Even so, much had to be left out. Forgive the excess, but we think that you understand.

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

Every issue has a theme and every theme has its arguments, pro and con. Our appeal for truth to the troops starts with truth in recruitment, including truth in reporting the results of recruitment.

A recent article cited by one of our readers, written by Tim Kane and James Jay Carafano, both veterans and staff members of The American Heritage Foundation, titled **“Debunking The Myth Of The Underprivileged Soldier”**, and available for downloading at http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2005-11-27-soldier-edit_x.htm, takes exception to the reports by others, including many recruiters, that the US military is targeting the underprivileged. The article says, in part,

“According to a comprehensive study of all enlistees for the years 1998-99 and 2003 that The Heritage Foundation just released, the typical recruit in the all-volunteer force is wealthier, more educated and more rural than the average 18- to 24-year-old citizen is. Indeed, for every two recruits coming from the poorest neighborhoods, there are three recruits coming from the richest neighborhoods.”

They cite enlistment statistics for high school diplomas (98%) from periods prior to when the services publicly dropped their enlistment standards. They don't define “poorest” and “richest”, i.e., poorer or richer than what?

My curiosity gets aroused when people select years out of sequence and leave out others to make their case. I also am more concerned with what is happening right now, since it is a clearer harbinger of the future. So, I went to the website of the National Priorities Project which has the raw data for just one year, 2004, but it has all of the data, without interpretation. I picked one state from each of the six regions of the US: West, California; Deep South,

Alabama; Northeast, Massachusetts; North Central, Michigan; East Coast, North Carolina; South/Southwest, Texas. My premise was that the marks of “underprivilege” were “Median Household Income” compared to the rest of that state and the nation, and “Percentage below the Poverty Line” compared the same way. The database had both of these statistics but did not have levels of education; but levels of education on a broad sample generally track with poverty levels, even though some individuals may rise above this hindrance. The database had a specific report on the top 15 (12 in the case of Massachusetts) Counties in each state. I do not claim that this is anything other than a pseudo-random sample, but it is a pretty broad sample from around the nation, and indicative of what a statistically pure sample might show.

The key figure in the raw data is numbers of enlistees per thousand residents in the 18-24 year range. The raw figures and the county reports support the claims of the recruiters (see the last article under **TATTOO**) and others who claim that they are targeting the poor and poorly educated. As income rises, in general, recruiting falls off. The poorest of counties seem to be providing the largest number of enlistees. Further, the poor counties that are predominantly Black or contain a large Hispanic population are providing above-norm levels of enlistees. I charted the recruiting rates per thousand and the Median Family Income on these highest producing counties, and almost invariably the recruiting rate sinks as the income climbs. The trend is truly flat only in Massachusetts, a wealthy state where the income exceeds the national average in most counties. A summary of the results is shown here; an Excel file with the data I used and the charts is available from the editor at scook@vuft.org. The broader data base is available from the National Priorities Project at <http://www.nationalpriorities.org>.

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC. IS A NATIONAL, NON-PROFIT, PUBLIC SERVICE CORPORATION, INCORPORATED IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA [#C2766290]. DONATIONS TO VUFT ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE PER CA RTC 23701W FROM CALIFORNIA INCOME TAX FOR THOSE WHO ITEMIZE DEDUCTIONS. FEDERAL TAX-EXEMPT, TAX-DEDUCTIBLE STATUS PENDING UNDER IRC 501(c)(19).

State	Total # of Counties	# in sample	Enlistments/1,000 18-24 y.o.		Median Household Income		% Child Poverty		% Poverty	
			state	avg in sample	state	avg in sample	state	avg in sample	state	avg in sample
Alabama	67	15	7.0	11.21	\$ 36,771	\$ 30,987	23.0%	24.2%	13.7%	18.1%
California	59	15	11.8	8.19	\$ 48,113	\$ 37,730	20.5%	17.8%	12.8%	17.8%
Massachusetts	14	12	4.7	3.45	\$ 50,587	\$ 48,278	14.4%	12.2%	9.9%	9.3%
Michigan	83	15	10.5	8.74	\$ 45,335	\$ 33,702	15.4%	15.8%	10.5%	12.1%
North Carolina	100	15	11.2	10.18	\$ 38,432	\$ 33,850	20.1%	21.4%	13.1%	14.7%
Texas	254	15	15.7	16.71	\$ 40,659	\$ 31,272	23.1%	23.4%	15.5%	16.8%
US	-	-	5.2	-	\$ 43,052	-	18.9%	-	12.1%	-

This data seems to support the argument that the military, as many recruiters have admitted, is targeting the poorest youngsters across the nation. While the data here is not cherry-picked, I cannot affirm that such a conclusion is universally accurate. I do believe that it is so, with a fairly high probability. Maybe it is just more of "figures lie and liars figure", but I don't think so. [Ed.]

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN, FREE, AND VERY WORTHWHILE! GET YOUR FELLOW VETERANS, AND VETERANS' FAMILY MEMBERS TO JOIN VUFT! WE ARE BEGINNING TO BE HEARD, AND WE NEED YOU TO HELP US GET THE MESSAGE OUT.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

OUTREACH: Bob Handy, chair of VUFT, Inc., and Sandy Cook, Vice Chair, attended the formation meeting of the Veterans and Military Families Council of the Democratic National Committee at their meeting in Phoenix, AZ on 2 December 2005. The meeting was very well attended and much enthusiasm was shown for dealing directly with Veterans' issues. As expected, at a political gathering there was little more politics than most veterans would have liked, but there was also some limited progress toward organization, and some progress toward getting the Democratic Party to focus more precisely on veterans' issues. We hope that we can make the same kind of outreach effort to the Republican Party as well.

We were very impressed with the organization of the veterans' group from Colorado (<http://coloradoveteransforamerica.com>). They have an 1800-person veterans organization going up there that is very active, and obviously well organized. Several of the Coloradans have joined VUFT, Inc. – welcome.

En route to Phoenix we had the opportunity to address a gathering of veterans and their family members in Palm Desert, CA. Great group who are really concerned and want to get involved. Several joined at that time, and more are expected to join us or other veterans' support groups in the near future.

MEMBERSHIP: After much consideration we have changed our requirements for membership in Veterans United For Truth, Inc. We have found that when dealing with Congress or with State Legislators it is imperative that we present not just good ideas, but more importantly to them, that we present a large front. That is to say, we must represent large numbers or we have a hard time getting a hearing – ideas be damned. Therefore, the board has decided to eliminate the donation requirement for membership. From now on, membership will be free; we are including those who subscribe-only to this newsletter as members to start with. The website join-up page has been changed to reflect this policy change (the FAQ page is not changed because of a glitch with the software, but will be shortly).

We will still encourage donations from everyone. Those who donate will receive one of our great membership lapel pins as a premium for their donation. All members will receive membership cards. There is no other difference in levels of membership.

The membership cards and pins will go out this weekend. If you do not get a card prior to the next issue let me know at scCook@vuft.org.

If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on our website. You can also buy our pins using the same method, should want just the pin, or if you want more than the one sent in response to your donation.

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS

THIS LETTER FROM PAUL RIECKHOFF ADDRESSES THE SUBJECT OF TORTURE AND MAKES A STRONG CASE FOR SUPPORTING THE MCCAIN AMENDMENT BECAUSE TORTURE WILL, IN THE LONG RUN, HURT OUR TROOPS MORE THAN IT WILL HELP THEM..

Dear Operation Truth Supporter,

Before we put word out to the media, we wanted our most dedicated supporters like you to receive early notice about a crucial campaign Operation Truth is joining.

The "[Torture Is Not US](#)" campaign, launched in conjunction with the American Progress Action Fund, is a push to get Congress to pass the McCain anti-torture amendment. On October 5, the U.S. Senate voted 90 to 9 in favor of this amendment offered by Republican Senator and Vietnam Prisoner of War John McCain. The amendment to the defense appropriations bill would outlaw torture of detainees in military custody and establish the Army Field Manual as the uniform standard for the interrogation of Department of Defense detainees.

Despite this being common-sense amendment, its final passage is in doubt, as the President has vowed to veto any legislation that contains the McCain amendment.

It is critical that you visit [www.tortureisnotUS.org](#) to offer support to the campaign. Not only is outlawing torture important for moral reasons, but condoning torture has a very real and negative impact on our Troops' safety.

First, by expressly allowing for torture by our forces, it puts our Troops at greater risk of being tortured by enemy combatants in this and future wars. John McCain knows what it is like to go through this kind of inhumane treatment. That is why he is doing all that he can to ensure other Americans don't suffer the same fate he did. Second, in this and future wars, American Troops must gain the trust and support of people in foreign lands in order to curb attacks and diffuse any insurgency like we're seeing in Iraq. It makes it difficult to gain that trust when we are seen as torturers.

Please take the time to go to [www.tortureisnotUS.org](#) to view a television ad created to support the campaign, and send an email to your friends encouraging them to stand behind John McCain and the safety of our Troops.

Thank you for REALLY supporting the Troops,

Paul Rieckhoff
Iraq Veteran
Founder and Executive Director
Operation Truth
[www.operationtruth.com](#)

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

BENEFITS' PACKAGE MAY BE ON HOLD TILL '06

By Rick Maze December 08, 2005 *Times staff writer*

Legislation on veterans' health care and other benefits could be put in the deep freeze until next year, the chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee said Wednesday.

Asked if the House and Senate will pass an omnibus veterans' benefits bill before Congress adjourns later this month, Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., said, "Probably not."

This would mean the only major veterans' bill to be enacted this year would be the measure already signed into law by President Bush that provides a 4.1 percent increase in veterans' disability and survivor benefits.

<More at: <http://www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-1402527.php>>

RETREAT – NEWS

REAL EXPERTS SPEAK OUT

On 2 November 2005 the Strategic Studies Institute of the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University held a seminar – U.S. Military Operations in Iraq: Planning, Combat, and Occupation. The report of Session I: Defeating the Iraqi Regime is interesting and is available at http://www.sais-jhu.edu/merrillcenter/Panel1_Summary.pdf

80% OF MILITARY VOTED OR TRIED TO

Pentagon Cites Simpler Absentee Balloting, More Outreach

Josh White - Washington Post Staff Writer - December 7, 2005

They fight and they vote.

Voter participation among members of the U.S. military reached an all-time high in 2004, reflecting a streamlined absentee balloting process and increased outreach efforts, Defense Department officials said. Nearly 80 percent of people in the uniformed armed services voted or attempted to vote in the last presidential election, according to a survey by the Federal Voting Assistance Program, which is supervised by the Pentagon. The 2004 participation rate reflected an increase of 10 percentage points from 2000 and was far higher than last year's rate for the general public, which was 64 percent.

<More at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/07/AR2005120701056.html?nav=rss_nation>

ARMY POISED TO CUT GUARD TROOPS TO PROTECT CORE PROGRAM

By Megan Scully, Congress Daily

Pressed to reduce future budgets beginning in fiscal 2007, the Army is poised to sacrifice three Army National Guard brigades to help prevent deep cuts to higher-priority items, including its flagship transformation and procurement program known as Future Combat Systems, according to sources.

Eliminating three brigades would reduce the Army's burgeoning personnel costs, but any troop cuts to the Army in general, and the National Guard in particular, are certain to generate stiff opposition on Capitol Hill. Lawmakers have repeatedly overridden the Pentagon by boosting the size of ground forces in recent years, especially with more troops serving multiple tours in hotspots like Iraq. <More at: <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/1205/120605cdam2.htm>>

IRAQI ARMY 'YEARS AWAY' FROM TAKING OVER

Tony Jones - Lateline: Australian Broadcasting Corporation - Nov 29, 2005

TONY JONES: One man who definitely doesn't think Iraqi troops are up to scratch is James Fallows. In a detailed investigation published in this month's Atlantic Monthly, he tries to work out why, after three years of occupation, Iraq still has no army ready to take the place of coalition forces. He's currently in Sydney to speak at a Values and Foreign Policy Conference convened by the Lowy Institute and he joins us now in our Sydney studio. Thanks for being here.

JAMES FALLOWS, AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST: My pleasure, thank you.

TONY JONES: Well, everyone from George Bush to John Howard agrees that the overwhelming priority in Iraq is to train an Iraqi army and a police force to take the place of the coalition forces. Why hasn't that happened?

JAMES FALLOWS: I think there are several reasons. One is the job is fundamentally very hard. Even in countries with advanced military cultures, like Australia or the US, training ordinary foot soldiers is difficult and training officers takes many years of experience and education. And almost every circumstance in Iraq makes this all the harder. The heritage of Saddam Hussein, which was not really a functional army, the regional divisions, all the other things we know about, plus a lack of attention and emphasis by the US for a year or two after the occupation, which is only now being redressed.

<More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/?Page=Article&ID=5558>>

NOTE: if you can get a copy of the Atlantic Monthly for December 2005, read the article "Why Iraq Has No Army" by James Fallows. If you cannot find it, send me an email (scook@vuft.org) and I will forward a copy to you – absolutely worth the read! You will understand why our troops will be there a long time, and concurrently why the issues we raise are huge.

GUARD ENTICES RANKS TO RECRUIT

Tom Vanden Brook - USA Today - Dec 02, 2005

The Army National Guard, battling a falloff in recruiting, is offering troops a finder's fee for lining up new soldiers

The Guard Recruiter Assistant Program, launched this week in five states, offers National Guard members \$1,000 for enlisting a recruit and another \$1,000 when the prospect shows up for basic training.

"Bring in 10 people and you can earn \$20,000," says Lt. Col. Mike Jones, deputy division chief for recruiting and retention at the National Guard Bureau.

The Army Guard and Reserve have struggled with recruiting as the Pentagon has leaned heavily on their soldiers to fight wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Before 9/11, Guard troops counted on drilling one weekend a month and two weeks each summer — not on overseas deployments as long as 18 months and the risk of death. As of Wednesday, 123,000 Guard and Reserve troops

were on active duty. The Guard recruited 50,219 troops — 20% short of its goal — in fiscal year 2005, which ended Sept. 30. <More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/?Page=Article&ID=5627>>

PERSONNEL CUTS AHEAD AT PENTAGON

United Press International | December 06, 2005

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Defense is looking at personnel cuts as a way to ease budget concerns, The Wall Street Journal reported.

The U.S. Army and Air Force are both looking to reduce current levels or delay planned increases, ahead of budget considerations. The Journal said the manpower reductions would make it easier to keep expensive weapons systems on the Pentagon budget wish list. <More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,82131,00.html?ESRC=eb.nl>>

ARMY WANTS VETS BACK

AP - Military.com - Nov 30, 2005

WASHINGTON - For former soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who might be toying with the idea of getting back into uniform, the Army has a new offer: Join us and regain your old rank without repeating basic training. It's the latest twist in the Army's pitch for recruits at a time when wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are making it increasingly difficult to enlist young people and meet the Army's need for 80,000 new soldiers a year.

"It's common sense," says Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, an Army spokesman. For the cost of mailing a brochure to targeted former service members, the Army can open a door that had been jammed shut before.

The Army previously had welcomed back former service members, but only under conditions that made it an unattractive proposition to most, namely that they would lose their prior rank and were required to take basic training again. Starting this month, the Army sent mailings to 78,000 people who left the Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps less than five years ago, including 7,000 officers, as first reported Monday by the private Army Times newspaper. They can re-enter at their former rank if they have not been out of the service for more than four years, and they are eligible for a signing bonus of up to \$19,000, depending on their skill specialty, Hilferty said. <More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/?Page=Article&ID=5610>>

COMPETING PLANS

On 30 Nov 2005 President Bush spoke at the Naval Academy at Annapolis and presented his "Plan for Victory", available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/nationalsecurity> - widely covered in the press. Very little attention has been given by the press to the plan offered by the Center for American Progress, entitled *Strategic Redeployment: A Progressive Plan for Iraq and the Struggle Against Violent Extremists*, By Lawrence Korb and Brian Katulis which was presented on September 29, 2005 (a summary and the full report are available at http://www.americanprogress.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=biJRJ8OVF&b=839805&content_id={9DF9C363-8A7C-42F0-AD2F-542936FC0C14}¬oc=1). Both are worth reviewing, not as a partisan exercise, rather to compare then in the light of the effect of each on the serving military.

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
12/15/05	1000	334 Cannon OB, Wash DC	Hearing	Sub Com'te Oversight	VA Flu Program
5/27-31/06	-	Washington DC	Legislative Action Rally	VUFT and others	Get their attention

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS WHY FAMILIES SHOULD HAVE TO HAVE FUNDRAISERS TO GET THEIR LOVED ONES HOME FOR A VISIT BEFORE DEPLOYMENT? HOW ABOUT SOME OF YOU FOLKS WHO GOT THE BIG TAX BREAKS AT LEAST DONATING YOUR FREQUENT FLYER MILES! THIS IS ANOTHER NATIONAL SHAME! [Ed.]

FUNDRAISER WILL HELP BRING SOLDIERS HOME

Jeff Della Rosa Staff Writer jeffd@nwanews.com - November 28, 2005

Janell Montgomery has been through the drill before. Her husband of four years, Jason, is in the Arkansas National Guard. Seeing him leave again on Nov. 8 was not easy. But in 2002, he was deployed to Texarkana, Texas, to patrol a base. Now he's

going to Iraq. "It's frightening to know that your husband is out there and you can't be there for him," she said. "It's hard to be strong." Montgomery, who works for a marketing company for Wal-Mart in Bentonville, is a soldier's wife.

So is Lisa Reading of Rogers. She, however, has not been through what Montgomery has before. But she knows he also must be strong for her two sons — Trey, 13, and Matt, 9. Her husband, Darrell, left on Nov. 10 for Fort Dix, N. J. In all, more than 100 soldiers from the 1st Battalion of the 142nd Fire Brigade's armory in Rogers Rogers will go to Iraq.

Reading and Montgomery want the soldiers of Battery C in Rogers to receive the same community support as other troops in the area did when they left for deployment. They both want to see their husbands again before they leave for Iraq. Currently, their husbands are in training at Fort Dix. Reading said her husband will acquire about four days of leave time while at the fort.

If he acquires the leave time, then he can come home. However, many soldiers who get leave cannot afford to come home. "For some of them, this is a financial burden," she said. Because of this, Reading, who is the support group leader for the wives of the soldiers, is starting to organize a fundraiser.

<More at: <http://nwnews.com/story.php?paper=bcdr§ion=News&storyid=28267>>

ADDITIONAL CLAIMS STAFF FOR VA

8 December 2005

Washington, D.C. — Yesterday, at a full Veterans' Committee oversight hearing on claims processing at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Chairman Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) heard testimony of excessive wait times for claims decisions and clear indications that VA needs more claims adjudicators.

The backlog of pending claims and the time it takes VA's Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to process a claim has increased over the past two years. Major concerns cited yesterday beyond the backlog of claims included:

- A lack of quality in claims decisions;
- A need for medical staff who conduct disability examinations to have a greater knowledge of health issues specific to veterans;
- The perception that some claims processors have a complacent or dismissive attitude about their work.

"Veterans just want to be treated well. They recognize that something is not right and they are making a claim. How they are treated is important. It is about quality and attitude," Chairman Buyer said.

Dr. William Jones, a retired U.S. Air Force flight surgeon, recounted his own tribulations with the VA claims process system over the past six years. Characterizing the claims process, he said, "the process is programmed to procrastinate . . . there appears to be little motivation to move the claims forward."

<More at: <http://www.vawatchdog.org/housecvanews/housecvanews12-08-05.htm>>

ADVOCATES OPPOSE HEALTH CARE COPAYMENT HIKES

By Rick Maze - Army Times staff writer

Major military associations are appealing to Congress to prevent increases in health care copayments and fees for service members and retirees.

The Military Coalition, a group of 36 associations representing 5.5 million active, reserve and retired service members and their families, is concerned about the Pentagon's recent announcement of an 8.5 percent increase in premiums for Tricare health coverage for reservists.

"The changes will go into effect next month, without any discussion or opportunity for congressional review or oversight," the Coalition says in a Dec. 8 letter to Congress. "Guard and Reserve members and families who have been putting their lives and civilian careers on the line deserve better." <More at: <http://www.armytimes.com/story.php?f=1-292925-1401991.php>>

SEE CHART ON LAST PAGE OF NEWSLETTER

SECRETIVE VA LAUNCHES NEW PTSD REVIEW

Larry Scott - OP-ED News - Nov 28, 2005

The latest "unannounced" move by the VA is a new review of PTSD diagnosis, treatment and compensation. The VA's plans came to light on November 16, just six days after they had canceled a review of 72,000 PTSD claims awarded at 100 per cent disability. Pressure from veterans' groups and Democrat members of Congress forced the cancellation.

The VA's new PTSD review was not announced by the VA. There was no VA press release. There was no VA press conference. The information was not posted on the VA web site. Information about the new PTSD review was made public in a press release

by Senator Larry Craig (R-ID), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The release, in part, said, "The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that it has contracted with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) on a two-pronged approach to the examination of PTSD."

Except, the VA hadn't announced anything. They were using Senator Craig as their conduit to hand out the bad news. Since Craig's press releases don't have a high readership, this information has gone virtually unnoticed.

<More including link to new PTSD criteria at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/?Page=Article&ID=5532>>

FOR SOME VETS, A HOME ISN'T WAITING

More local veterans are returning to find they have no place to live and little help to remedy plight

Cassi Feldman - Knowledge plex/Ap/Newsday - Dec 02, 2005

After 10 months of washing laundry and setting up showers in Iraq, Army reservist Wanda Borders couldn't wait to get back to the Bronx. She figured she'd stay with her grandmother for a few months until she found a place of her own. But without a paycheck, landing an apartment in New York's tight rental market proved nearly impossible. For more than a year, she and her young children bounced among relatives' homes, often sleeping on couches or floors. "It's very frustrating, not being able to support my family the way I would want to, depending on other people for everything," Borders said. Borders is part of a small but troubling trend: Local veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq with no place to live and not enough support services to find a home. <More at: <http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org/?Page=Article&ID=5609>>

WAR'S STRAIN WEARING ON TROOPS

USA Today | November 25, 2005

WASHINGTON - Drawing lessons from his own career, Col. Mat Moten tells his students at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., they could one day have a duty just as important as fighting terrorism: helping rebuild an Army fractured and exhausted by a long and unpopular war.

For Moten, it's a familiar story, one he first heard as a West Point cadet in 1978. Then, the all-volunteer Army was struggling after Vietnam. "It's not a cheery message," Moten says.

It's a message also echoed last week by Rep. John Murtha, a Pennsylvania Democrat and 37-year veteran of the Marine Corps, as he called for troops to start leaving Iraq immediately.

"The future of our military is at risk," Murtha said. "Our military and their families are stretched thin. Many say that the Army is broken. Some of our troops are on their third deployment. Recruitment is down, even as our military has lowered its standards."

Although there's no agreed-upon standard to determine the war's overall effect on the military, even those who disagree with Murtha about an immediate withdrawal, including Senators such as Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and John McCain, R-Ariz., agree that the strains on a force fighting two wars at once are obvious.

<More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,81287,00.html?ESRC=army-a.nl>>

MILITARY MISLEADS PRESS, FAMILIES, ABOUT HOW 10 MARINES DIED LAST WEEK IN IRAQ

Editor & Publisher - 06 December 2005

New York - Why did the U.S. military mislead the media and the families of ten Marines killed near the Iraqi city of Falluja while "on patrol" last week about how they were killed? The military announced on Tuesday that it actually happened at a "promotion" ceremony and they were not on foot patrol as initially reported.

Families of the victims immediately raised questions about the incident and it was unclear whether the site had been properly swept for explosive devices.

The Marines were in a disused flour mill on the outskirts of the city to celebrate the promotion of three soldiers, a military statement said on Tuesday.

As the ceremony ended, the Marines dispersed and one of them is thought to have stepped on a buried pressure plate linked to explosives that caused the devastating blast.

But CNN, for example, reported four days ago, based on military reports, that the dead Marines "were conducting a nighttime foot patrol when a roadside bomb fashioned with large artillery shells detonated."

<More at: http://www.truthout.org/docs_2005/120705C.shtml>

YOUTHS IN RURAL U.S. ARE DRAWN TO MILITARY

Recruits' Job Worries Outweigh War Fears

Ann Scott Tyson - Washington Post Staff Writer - November 4, 2005; A01

As sustained combat in Iraq makes it harder than ever to fill the ranks of the all-volunteer force, newly released Pentagon demographic data show that the military is leaning heavily for recruits on economically depressed, rural areas where youths' need for jobs may outweigh the risks of going to war.

More than 44 percent of U.S. military recruits come from rural areas, Pentagon figures show. In contrast, 14 percent come from major cities. Youths living in the most sparsely populated Zip codes are 22 percent more likely to join the Army, with an opposite trend in cities. Regionally, most enlistees come from the South (40 percent) and West (24 percent).

Many of today's recruits are financially strapped, with nearly half coming from lower-middle-class to poor households, according to new Pentagon data based on Zip codes and census estimates of mean household income. Nearly two-thirds of Army recruits in 2004 came from counties in which median household income is below the U.S. median.

<More at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/03/AR2005110302528.html>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

Total number currently on active duty in support of the partial mobilization for the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 123,304; Navy Reserve, 4,121; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 8,417; Marine Corps Reserve, 8,425; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 421. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel, who have been mobilized, to 144,648, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel, who are currently mobilized, can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2005/d20051207ngr.pdf>.

ARMY SPECIAL OPS PIONEER DIES

Associated Press | December 08, 2005

SOUTHERN PINES, N.C. - Retired Lt. Gen. William P. Yarborough, an early leader of the Army's Airborne forces who gained President John F. Kennedy's blessing for special forces soldiers to wear green berets, has died, a family spokesman said Wednesday. Yarborough, 93, died late Tuesday after complications from hip surgery, said Rudi Gresham, the general's longtime aide.
<More at: <http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,82311,00.html?ESRC=eb.nl>>



IN MEMORIAM – 64 YEARS ON

The Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor and other military bases on Oahu lasted two hours, leaving 21 U.S. ships heavily damaged and 323 aircraft damaged or destroyed. It killed 2,390 people and wounded 1,178.

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY DECEMBER 09, 2005

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

KILLED US	2,138
WOUNDED US [5 Nov + ESTIMATE]	≥ 15,955
KILLED UK	98
KILLED OTHER COALITION	103
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	600
KILLED CONTRACTORS	287
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 33,755
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS	≥ 30,877
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIV	≥ 139,262

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

KILLED US	257
WOUNDED/INJURED US	658
KILLED COALITION	126
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	378
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS	≥ 3,525

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

AFTERTHOUGHT

THIS IS WHAT GETS OUR GUYS IN TROUBLE – IRAQIS DON'T DIFFERENTIATE – AN AMERICAN IS AN AMERICAN

'TROPHY' VIDEO EXPOSES PRIVATE SECURITY CONTRACTORS SHOOTING UP IRAQI DRIVERS

By Sean Rayment - The Telegraph UK

Sunday 27 November 2005

A "trophy" video appearing to show security guards in Baghdad randomly shooting Iraqi civilians has sparked two investigations after it was posted on the internet, the Sunday Telegraph can reveal.

The video has sparked concern that private security companies, which are not subject to any form of regulation either in Britain or in Iraq, could be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of innocent Iraqis.

The video, which first appeared on a website that has been linked unofficially to Aegis Defence Services, contained four separate clips, in which security guards open fire with automatic rifles at civilian cars. All of the shooting incidents apparently took place on "route Irish", a road that links the airport to Baghdad.

<More, including the video, at: http://www.truthout.org/docs_2005/112805A.shtml>

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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PROPOSED INCREASES IN TRICARE FEES - FOR UNDER-65 RETIREES AND THEIR FAMILIES

TRICARE PRIME ENROLLMENT FEES:

Current:	Individual/family annual rate \$230/\$460			
		As of Oct. 1, 2006	As of Oct. 1, 2007	As of Oct. 1, 2008
Proposed:		Individual/family	Individual/family	Individual/family
	Officers	\$400/\$800	\$600/\$1200	\$750/\$1500
	Enlisted	\$300/\$600	\$375/\$750	\$450/\$900

TRICARE STANDARD ENROLLMENT FEES:

Current:	None			
		As of Oct. 1, 2006	As of Oct. 1, 2007	As of Oct. 1, 2008
Proposed:		Individual/family	Individual/family	Individual/family
	Officers	\$150/\$300	\$225/\$450	\$300/\$600
	Enlisted	\$100/\$200	\$150/\$300	\$200/\$400

TRICARE STANDARD/TRICARE EXTRA ANNUAL DEDUCTIBLE:

Current:	Individual/family annual rate \$150/\$300			
		As of Oct. 1, 2006	As of Oct. 1, 2007	As of Oct. 1, 2008
Proposed:		Individual/family	Individual/family	Individual/family
	Officers	\$200/\$400	\$250/\$500	\$300/\$600
	Enlisted	\$175/\$350	\$175/\$350	\$200/\$400

TRICARE PHARMACY CO-PAYMENTS:

(Retail and Mail Order; on-base drugs still no charge)

		Generic	Brand	Non-Formulary
Current:		\$3	\$9	\$22
Proposed:				
	Retail	\$5	\$15	\$22
	Mail Order	\$0	\$10	\$22