

# SOUND OFF!



VOL. VI, NO 10

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

20 JUNE 2011

## FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

### THERE ARE IGs AND STATISTICS ~ AND THEN THERE'S REAL LIFE

On 18 May of this year the VA's Office of the Inspector General (VAOIG), Office of Audits and Evaluations released report #11-22510-167, “*Systemic Issues Reported During Inspections of VA Regional Offices*”. The inspections took place between 4/09 and 9/10. [www.va.gov/oig/52/reports/2011/VAOIG-11-00510-167.pdf](http://www.va.gov/oig/52/reports/2011/VAOIG-11-00510-167.pdf)

Good report, for an IG report – necessary – thoroughly meets their stated objective in the context of all IG reports.

Many of our organizations involved in veterans' affairs and the press are quoting the report, largely citing the statistics displayed in the various tables and diagrams. We are all missing a critical point when we do this. Let me explain.

There are at least three things wrong with the report:

1. It is a stereotypical IG report, albeit a fairly good one of the type.
2. It doesn't seem to consider the patient as a “stakeholder” in the process, even though it mentions them a few times.
3. It does not consider in its statistical analysis in any real way those who are denied access to the system, thus while it is fairly complete as to its stated purpose, it is to a very large degree incomplete in addressing the problems it uncovers.

Let's deal with each of these in turn.

#### **What do I mean by a “stereotypical” IG report?**

- It is one which adopts the softest language possible regardless of the seriousness of the issue.

- It is one that includes summaries and diagrams that tempt the reader to go forward with the high level conclusions rather than dig into the details.
- It is one that emphasizes improvement even though the “improvement” may be from an abysmal previous position.

#### ***What is the evidence that the report does not consider the patient as a stakeholder?***

- In the *Introduction* (p 1 of the report), it says, “...inspections may examine issues or allegations referred by VA employees, members of Congress, or other stakeholders.” At best this reduces veterans, beneficiaries or not, to the class of “others”.

#### ***How is it incomplete?***

- Following on its trivialization of the role of the veteran except as an object of the process and practices of the VA, there is no mention at all of the thousands of veterans whom we all know (including many of you) who have failed to get in the system for myriad reasons, including the fact that many give up when faced with the incompetence and opposition of the VA system.

The concentration on summary statements and diagrams that show the statistics but not the details leads many reviewers of the report to quote those summaries when the pain and agony is in the details. The public reviewers—the press and others—have cited the “23% error rate in disability claims processing” but have missed the reasons, which are

clearly stated in the report but seldom in the summaries.

So if will forgive me some overkill, let me provide you with just some of the gory details right here:

#### Finding One ~ Disability Claims Processing

Page 3: "... staff incorrectly processed about 23% of an estimated 45,000 [disability] claims."

Page 4: "None of the 10 [regional offices] inspected followed VBA policy in processing these claims"

"... VARO management did not establish controls to ensure staff input reminder(s) for reexaminations ..."

Page 5: "... fifty percent did not follow DVA policy when processing PTSD claims."

"... VARO staff lacked sufficient experience and training to process claims accurately

Page 6: "... 75% did not follow the VBA policy when processing claims for residual [disabilities] of TBI."

"... staff did not adequately process about 19% of approximately 4,100 TBI claims ..."

"... VARO staff lacked sufficient experience and training to process TBI claims accurately."

"... some VAROs did not perform adequate quality reviews of completed TBI claims."

Page 7: "VA medical examiners did not always use the most current examination formats ... [thus] ... reports did not contain the necessary information to properly render disability determinations."

page 8: "... 44% did not follow VBA policy when processing herbicide exposure-related claims."

"... VARO staff lacked sufficient experience and training to process these types of claims accurately."

page 9: "... 83% did not follow VBA policy when processing Haas [Vietnam offshore waters herbicide exposure] claims.

Page 10: "... Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) did not develop necessary evidence to support [Haas] rating decisions."

#### Finding 2 ~ Data Integrity

Page 12: "VARO staff exceeded VBA's seven-day standard for [37% of the] NODs (Notices of Disagreement) reviewed. ... [this] occurred because of a lack of staff training and inadequate oversight of the appeals workload."

#### Finding 3 ~ Management Controls

Page 13: "... (44 percent) did not follow VBA policy when correcting errors identified VBAs STAR (Systematic Technical Accuracy Review) staff. ... [although] management erroneously reported to STAR staff that all corrective actions

were completed. In all instances VSC management did not provide oversight ..."

Page 14: "... [VAOIG reported to Congress during this period that] most regional offices did not have formal procedures in place to ensure employees took corrective actions on errors identified by STAR staff."

#### Finding 4 ~ Systematic Analysis of Operations (SAOs)

"... 38% of the 16 regional offices did not follow VBA policy to ensure SAOs were timely and complete. ... [30% of the analyses] were untimely and/or incomplete."

"Vacancies in senior management positions seemed to have a negative impact on VARO operations."

#### Finding 5 ~ Workload Management and Information Security

Page 16: 75% did not always control and process mail according to VBA policy. ... VARO management and staff were generally unaware of policy requirements ..."

"At three (19 percent) of the VAROs inspected, mailroom staff did not always process all incoming mail daily."

Page 17: "At 10 (63 percent) of the 16 VAROs, staff untimely controlled and improperly managed claims-related mail."

#### Finding Six ~ Destruction and Safeguarding of Documents

Page 18: "... the 9 VAROs where the safeguarding of personally identifiable information (PII) was examined did not always safeguard veterans PII [100% of those examined]."

#### Finding Seven ~ Control over Competency Determinations

"... staff at seven VAROs unnecessarily delayed making the final competency decisions in 34% of cases completed from April 2009 to March 2010. These delays ranged from approximately 17 to 530 days."

Page 20: "... managers at one VARO were unaware of the requirement to complete [competency] decisions "immediately" until [informed of the policy by the IG]."

This is a report not of a system which has some problems, rather it is the textbook for the bureaucratic equivalent of "the gang who couldn't shoot straight."

Now as we all know from our own IG experience it is then the inspectees turn to respond.

Returning to the stereotype, normally the command that has been inspected will try to do 3 things:

1. Find their own way of presenting the IGs findings in the best possible light.
2. Promise to fix things either immediately ("we have already taken steps"), or in the future without tying themselves down to either a schedule or promises of results.

3. When all else fails, blame it on something outside of their control,, preferably on the headquarters that sent the inspector out.

So, the Veterans Benefit Administration responded to the report (not to their own failed processes and policies) and I include here selected VBA comments and recommendations for change to the report, edited for text but not substance. No surprises here.

- Computer errors not human errors caused errors in processing temporary 100%-disability claims.
- Please add to the report about these claims that VBA agreed to address the errors.
- After stressor letter requirement was dropped PTSD claims processing improved so please drop the statement that improvement is needed in this area.
- We are working on training for staff.
- We are going to implement a strategy for ensuring the accuracy of TBI decisions.
- VBA and VHA will work together to make sure that medical examinations tell the whole story on PTSD/TBI. We will tell all to follow the instructions we have previously provided [which, according to the report, everyone, especially management, seems to ignore].
- We will now define "immediate" as 21 days in competency determinations.

So citing the 23% error rate masks the fact that it is the weighted average of all disability determination errors, and that initial error rate for 100% disability determinations was **83%!**

**Think of that!** For every 17 people who got a fair determination, **83** people found out later that they either got rated 100% when they shouldn't have been, or were denied the 100% rating and had to suffer through re-applying, or most likely, they just gave up. And this wasn't just in one place—it was across the system at 16 different VAROs.

I presume that if the previous inspection, whenever that was, had found out that the correct action rate was 15%, the VBA could now claim the results of this inspection as a "13% improvement".

Now they can:

"develop a plan to convene a meeting which will attempt to establish a strategy to determine what should be in the plan for addressing the errors, which, given budget considerations cannot be implemented until at least the next fiscal year or the one thereafter, if the analysis shows that it is necessary." [I made this one up but it fits the mind-set.]

Meanwhile, a large segment of 23.1 million veterans wait—and wait—and wait!

The system obviously suffers from the self-concept that it is fully established: no one who counts has complained in the past or at least not much, so the old ways will be continued unless we are forced to change. The typical reaction of an entrenched bureaucracy.

I think that General Shinseki is trying hard, and certainly harder than his immediate predecessors. General, the old ways won't work anymore.

The administrative processes are in shambles. The medical programs, at least in the area we have been concentrating on—PTSD and TBI—don't seem to be coming close to addressing the need.

This latter conclusion is based on the evidence we get every day from those who are suffering out there and who have found scant relief in the conventional approaches that the VA is offering.

Yes I know, what we hear is only "anecdotal evidence." This is what we are told not only by the VA but by the Department of Justice all the time.

*an-ec-do-tal/* | anik<sup>1</sup> dōtl/Adjective

1. (of an account) Not necessarily true or reliable, because based on personal accounts rather than facts or research.

Well folks, once you hear hundreds of these "anecdotal" stories you begin to believe that the anecdotes are far closer to the truth than the research, and light years closer to the truth than the VA official record would have you believe.

Where is the search for new and perhaps non-standard approaches that are working elsewhere? Where is the enthusiasm to adopt new ways in technology and in medicine?

Believing that the old ways will work if you just apply them better is as much of a sin as failing to look for new solutions.

When you went to summer camp you could steer the canoe by dragging your paddle on one side or the other. If you try that with a supertanker, you are a fool. The VA, with nearly 300,000 employees is a real supertanker of a bureaucracy. No matter how hard you drag that same old paddle, it is not going to turn.

General Shinseki must know by now that his greatest enemy is the entrenched bureaucracy. If he doesn't, someone please ask him to call any one of us veterans, especially those who have tried and failed to get the benefits their nation has promised them. [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](http://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/](http://www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/). Also this site for west coasters [www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp](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 9<sup>th</sup> 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](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

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7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9<sup>th</sup> 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. 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit accepts the case.

05/20/11 The 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled in part in our favor, specifically on the Constitutional issues in our claim.

27 May Case Management Conference before the original trial judge, Judge Conti, in Federal District Court in San Francisco.

6/20/11 Waiting for Judge Conti to call out the next step

WE WILL KEEP YOU POSTED

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. [www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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.

**The case is moving on and we must support our legal team.  
Please dig down and help us if you can. Any amount helps.**

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

[www.vuft.org/donate.html](http://www.vuft.org/donate.html)

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

**FRIENDS ARE WHERE YOU FIND THEM.** Chicago Tribune, Sunday, May 29, 2011 Sent by "camiblue@vaw.org"

"I'm a father; a retired business person, and a military veteran (Army, infantry, Vietnam). I'd like to see Memorial Day be a day for dialog on issues that really matter for the future of our children and for this country as a whole. There are many things that can be discussed. Here are some suggestions:

- Why do we have war?
- Why do we so proudly send our children to kill other children?
- Why are weapons our No. 1 export product?
- Why do we have more than 700 military bases in more than 140 countries?
- Why do almost half of our tax dollars go to the war industry?
- Why do we cheer when the government chooses to assassinate someone instead of using the rule of law?
- Why do we ignore the Geneva Conventions and the voices of experienced interrogators and use torture?
- Why do we allow those in power to demonize entire nations, or cultures, or religions?
- Why do we think we are better than the rest of the people of the world?
- Why do we let the corporate-owned media tell us what to think and do?
- Why are we so afraid of everything?
- Why do we read so little and watch TV so much?
- Why don't we know our history?

So while you're grilling your hot dogs or standing at the parade, bring up an issue, get other viewpoints, engage in dialog. The children of this country are depending on it."

### **FOR OUR CALIFORNIA AREA VETS**

Flyers/Fact Sheets on the Veterans Homes of Greater Los Angeles and Ventura Counties! Are available on line There is immediate availability for the Lancaster [www.calvet.ca.gov/Homes/Lancaster.aspx](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/Homes/Lancaster.aspx) and Barstow [www.calvet.ca.gov/Homes/Barstow.aspx](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/Homes/Barstow.aspx) Veterans Homes for assisted living and independent living (in Barstow). Thank you for helping us to spread the word about these wonderful Veterans Homes that were built as an expression of gratitude toward California's deserving Veterans. A veteran and a spouse can also apply! Thank you so much for your help! -- Jeanne Bonfilio - Public Information Officer - California DVA

### **23% OF DISABILITY CLAIMS PROCESSED INCORRECTLY**

May 21, 2011 • Ben Krause -

Ten years ago, the VA Inspector General didn't investigate veterans' allegations of VA misconduct. At that time the VA IG's office investigated only veterans that purportedly made false claims. Now, as the following article illustrates, the VA Inspector General estimates 23% of veterans' disability claims were "processed incorrectly."

In that the VA's General Counsel recently admitted to a Supreme Court Justice that 60-70% of the veterans' disability claims denied by the Board of Veterans Appeals were "in error" and wrongfully decided, the VA IG's estimate would seem somewhat shy of the truth.

The plain truth is that the VA's disability claims process is not the Due Process that the Constitution guarantees as *justice for all* citizens and non-citizens alike. When "damage control" and "stonewalling" are recognized as "conspiracy to defraud" and "obstruction of justice" it will be apparent to all that 100% of the VA's quasi-judicial disability decisions were wrongfully decided. Norm & Dixie

<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/05/va-audit-23-percent-of-disability-claims-incorrectly-processed/>

## RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

### THAT'S JUST WHAT SOMEONE WHO IS SUICIDAL NEEDS—"NEXT-DAY SERVICE"

#### SENATORS TELL VA TO REDUCE VETERAN SUICIDES

Rob Hotakainen - McClatchy Newspapers - May. 25, 2011

With veterans now accounting for one of every five suicides in the nation, the Department of Veterans Affairs is under pressure from the courts and Congress to fix its mental health services in an attempt to curb the death toll.

"The suicide rate is out of control. It's epidemic proportions right now," said Paul Rieckhoff, the executive director of the group Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "There are very few programs that are effective, and there's a serious lack of national awareness."

While the government keeps no official tally of veteran suicides, the VA said last year that veterans account for roughly 20 percent of the estimated 30,000 suicides annually in the United States.

... Antonette Zeiss, the acting deputy chief officer of mental health services with the VA's Office of Patient Care Services, said the department's call center had received more than 400,000 calls since it began nearly four years ago. Of those, she said, more than 55,000 were referred to local VA suicide prevention coordinators for same-day or next-day service.

<More at: [www.miamiherald.com/2011/05/25/v-print/2235085/senators-tell-va-to-reduce-veteran.html#ixzz1Ns4kTRRT](http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/05/25/v-print/2235085/senators-tell-va-to-reduce-veteran.html#ixzz1Ns4kTRRT)>

### ANOTHER TWEAK AROUND THE EDGES

#### H.R. 1484 - VETERANS APPEALS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2011- 4/12/2011--INTRODUCED.

Provides that if a veteran claimant submits evidence in support of a case for which a substantive appeal has been filed to the Board of Veterans' Appeals, such evidence shall be submitted directly to the Board and not to a regional office of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), unless the claimant requests that the evidence first be reviewed by the regional office. Establishes the Veterans Judicial Review Commission to evaluate and make specific decisions to improve the administrative and judicial appellate review processes of veterans' and survivors' benefits determinations. (Passed in the house on 6/6; in the Senate, Veterans Affairs on 6/6 – no action there to date).

### SEE! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS SAY, "DO IT!" – THAT SHOULD SOLVE IT – YOU THINK?

#### LAWMAKER: FIND 400K JOBS FOR VETS IN TWO YEARS

The chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee announced an ambitious goal Wednesday of finding jobs for 400,000 veterans within two years, a move that would reduce the unemployment rate for veterans of all generations from 7.7 percent today to about 4.5 percent.

To do this, Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., said he doesn't want to create new programs or spend additional money. Instead, he wants to concentrate on making sure existing public and private programs are working efficiently.

"Good jobs are out there. We just need to retool our programs so veterans can compete for them," Miller said.

The problem might be more difficult, requiring that a broad sword be taken to bureaucracy that could be making it harder for veterans to land jobs. Veterans looking for jobs — and the employers who might want to hire them — face a confusing array of programs, a panel of employment experts told the committee.

There are 8,000 websites providing information about veterans' employment, said Jolene Jefferies of Direct Employers Association, a non-profit group that helps 600 U.S. corporations with recruiting strategies.

For all of that information, there is nothing available that tells employers how to locate veterans who are qualified for the available jobs, said Jefferies, the association's vice president for strategic initiatives.

<More at: [www.stripes.com/news/veterans/lawmaker-sets-goal-of-finding-400-000-jobs-for-vets-in-two-years-1.145312](http://www.stripes.com/news/veterans/lawmaker-sets-goal-of-finding-400-000-jobs-for-vets-in-two-years-1.145312)>

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB FILNER, RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER, FULL COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS, AND A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA - 6/16/11**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this very important hearing today.

Over the last four years, I have raised serious concerns with the backlog of claims for our veterans. There are a record number of our service men and women returning home with scars from the war and now is not the time to delay their benefits. The report released last year by the VA Inspector General focusing on the delay of our service members getting an appointment for a medical exam in order to process their claim for compensation is just another example of how the VA is failing our veterans. The VA system has many obstacles for our warriors by putting them through numerous medical exams for each individual ailment for which they are filing a claim. The VA could easily streamline this process and allow the veteran to receive one complete medical exam to expedite the claims process, alleviate the stress on our veterans, and save our veterans and taxpayers money.

**The recent decision issued by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in *Veterans for Common Sense and Veterans United for Truth v. Shinseki* found that veterans have a property interest conferred upon them by the Constitution to both VA benefits and health care. Ruling for the veteran plaintiffs, the 9th Circuit went a step further to conclude that because these are property interests, delaying access to health care or the adjudication of claims, violates veterans' due process rights guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment.**

I agree with this ruling wholeheartedly and am disappointed that the VA has not done more to fix the problem.

<More at: <http://republicans.veterans.house.gov/prepared-statement/opening-statement-hon-bob-filner-ranking-democratic-member-full-committee-0>>

**BILL WOULD OK MILITARY ABORTIONS FOR RAPE**

June 16, 2011 at 2:31 PM

WASHINGTON, June 16 (UPI) -- U.S. military healthcare should cover abortions in cases of rape, says a woman who claims her Army career was ruined after she was raped and got pregnant.

"It's a disgrace, especially when it comes to rape and sexual assault, that this option is not available," Jessica Kenyon, 30, who left the military in 2006 and now works with victims of military sexual abuse, told ABC News.

... U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., introduced a Military Access to Reproductive Care and Health bill Thursday. A similar bill was introduced in the House last week.

<More at: [www.upi.com/Top\\_News/US/2011/06/16/Bill-would-ok-military-abortion-for-rape/UPI-93141308249070/print/#ixzz1PevuCzIV](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2011/06/16/Bill-would-ok-military-abortion-for-rape/UPI-93141308249070/print/#ixzz1PevuCzIV)>

**RETREAT – NEWS**

**VETERANS AGENCY MADE SECRET DEAL OVER BENEFITS**

David Evans - Sep 14, 2010

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs failed to inform 6 million soldiers and their families of an agreement enabling Prudential Financial Inc. to withhold lump-sum payments of life insurance benefits for survivors of fallen service members, according to records made public through a Freedom of Information request.

The amendment to Prudential's contract is the first document to show how VA officials sanctioned a payment practice that has spurred investigations by lawmakers and regulators. Since 1999, Prudential has used so-called retained-asset accounts, which allow the company to withhold lump-sum payments due to survivors and earn investment income on the money for itself.

... Prudential held \$662 million of survivors' money in its corporate general account as of June 30, according to information provided by the VA. Prudential's general account earned 4.2 percent in 2009, mostly from bond investments, according to regulatory filings. The company has paid survivors holding Alliance Accounts 0.5 percent in 2010.

<More at: [www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-14/veterans-agency-arranged-secret-deal-with-prudential-over-soldier-benefits.html](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-14/veterans-agency-arranged-secret-deal-with-prudential-over-soldier-benefits.html)>

## **COULD THERE BE A LEADERSHIP PROBLEM HERE?**

### **3 ARMY COLONELS IN S. KOREA REPRIMANDED OVER GAYS SKIT**

Jon Rabiuff - Stars and Stripes - May 24, 2011

SEOUL – Three South Korea-based colonels have been reprimanded for their part in a skit that officials believe made fun of homosexuals and the rules designed to protect them in the military.

The skit – performed March 22 at a dinner attended by 8th Army officials at the Dragon Hill Lodge on Yongsan Garrison – featured the officers using effeminate gestures in portraying openly gay musicians Elton John and George Michael as soldiers, and then lip-synching a song by Boy George, who is also homosexual.

<More at: [www.stripes.com/news/3-army-colonels-in-s-korea-reprimanded-over-gays-skit-1.144415](http://www.stripes.com/news/3-army-colonels-in-s-korea-reprimanded-over-gays-skit-1.144415)>

### **NAVY HAS SPIKE IN COMMANDING-OFFICER FIRINGS**

Craig Whitlock - June 17

The Navy has fired a dozen commanding officers this year, a near-record rate, with the bulk getting the ax for offenses related to sex, alcohol or other forms of personal misconduct.

The terminations, which follow a similar spike in firings last year, have shaken the upper ranks of the Navy, which has long invested enormous responsibility in its commanding officers and prides itself on a tradition of carefully cultivating captains and admirals.

Over the past 18 months, the Navy has sacked nine commanding officers for sexual harassment or inappropriate personal relationships. Three others were fired for alcohol-related offenses, and two on unspecified charges of personal misconduct. Combined, they account for roughly half of the 29 commanding officers relieved during that period.

<More at: [www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/navy-has-spike-in-commanding-officer-firings-most-for-personal-misconduct/2011/06/14/AGZJi7YH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/navy-has-spike-in-commanding-officer-firings-most-for-personal-misconduct/2011/06/14/AGZJi7YH_story.html)>

## **WE SHOULDN'T COMPLAIN – THEY SCREW EACH OTHER TOO!**

### **VA'S REFUSAL TO FOLLOW ITS OWN PAY LAWS**

WASHINGTON, June 9, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ — The American Federation of Government Employees and its National VA Council (NVAC) yesterday, urged the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs to support legislation that would provide full bargaining rights over compensation for physicians, dentists, registered nurses and other VA health care professionals covered by the Title 38 personnel system. AFGE National Secretary-Treasurer J. David Cox testified before the committee to stress the importance of passing S.572 to restore the compensation bargaining rights of health care clinicians at the VA and hold the agency accountable for its own pay laws.

... "Over the past eight years, the VA has interpreted the Title 38 bargaining rights law to single out medical professionals covered under this regulation, and deprive them of basic rights to grieve and negotiate over routine pay matters," said Cox.

<More at: [www.afge.org/index.cfm?page=PressReleases&PressReleaseID=1290&print=True](http://www.afge.org/index.cfm?page=PressReleases&PressReleaseID=1290&print=True)>

### **U.S. DEFENSE OFFICIALS CAN'T SAY WHAT HAPPENED TO \$6.6 BILLION IN CASH SENT TO IRAQ**

Paul Richter - Los Angeles Times - June 13, 2011

After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the George W. Bush administration flooded the conquered country with so much cash to pay for reconstruction and other projects in the first year that a new unit of measurement was born. Pentagon officials determined that one giant C-130 Hercules cargo plane could carry \$2.4 billion in shrink-wrapped bricks of \$100 bills. They sent an initial full planeload of cash, followed by 20 other flights to Iraq by May 2004 in a \$12-billion haul that U.S. officials believe to be the biggest international cash airlift of all time.

This month, the Pentagon and the Iraqi government are finally closing the books on the program that handled all those Benjamins. But despite years of audits and investigations, U.S. Defense officials still cannot say what happened to \$6.6 billion in cash — enough to run the Los Angeles Unified School District or the Chicago Public Schools for a year, among many other things. For the first time, federal auditors are suggesting that some or all of the cash may have been stolen, not just mislaid in an accounting error. <More at: <http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-missing-billions-20110613.0,4414060.story>>



## **PARRIS ISLAND GETS FIRST FEMALE CO**

June 17, 2011 - Associated Press

PARRIS ISLAND, S.C. --- For the first time in its 96-year history, a female general will lead the famed Marine Corps training installation at South Carolina's Parris Island.

The Marine Corps says Brig. Gen. Loretta Reynolds will take charge of the depot Friday. The one-star Naval Academy graduate is taking command from Brig. Gen. Frederick Padilla, who will lead the 3rd Marine Division in Okinawa, Japan.

<More at: [www.military.com/news/article/parris-island-gets-first-female-co.html](http://www.military.com/news/article/parris-island-gets-first-female-co.html)>

## **HIS PARTING GIFT?**

### **GATES PUTS PAY CUTS ON THE TABLE**

May 26, 2011 - Terry Howell

Under pressure to reduce the DoD budget, Defense Secretary Robert Gates has until recently avoided asking for a reduction in military pay and benefits. However, the Wall Street Journal has reported that increasing pressure on lawmakers to make bigger cuts in the federal deficit has convinced defense budget planners that Congress is willing to look at cutting military compensation. <More at: <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/05/gates-floats-idea-of-pay-cuts/>>

## **RETIRING JCS WILL NOT BE OUTDONE!**

### **MULLEN SAYS PAY, BENEFIT CUTS 'ON THE TABLE'**

Christian Lowe - June 03, 2011 - Military.com

The Pentagon's top officer said Thursday that servicemembers will likely see cuts in pay and benefits as the military plumbs its budget for nearly half a trillion dollars in savings over the next 12 years.

Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen warned against taking the "relatively easy" choice of cutting hardware while maintaining the increasing costs of paying and providing ongoing health care to troops and retirees.

<More at: [www.military.com/news/article/mullen-says-pay-benefit-cuts-on-the-table.html](http://www.military.com/news/article/mullen-says-pay-benefit-cuts-on-the-table.html)>

## **COMPANY CHARGED WITH TAKING CONTRACTS EARMARKED FOR DISABLED VETS**

Joe Lambe - The Kansas City Star – 17 June 11

Federal indictments unsealed today in Kansas charge a Blue Springs family and a Leawood man in a scheme that prosecutors say deprived disabled veterans of millions of dollars in federal contracts.

The defendants got about \$6.8 million in construction contracts in 2009 and 2010 that by law were to go to companies owned by disabled vets, according to court records.

Warren K. Parker, 69, of Blue Springs, falsely claimed to be a much decorated Vietnam War veteran when he actually served in the Missouri National Guard, Barry Grissom, United States attorney for Kansas, said in a press conference.

<More at: [www.kansascity.com/2011/06/16/2955100/company-charged-taking-contracts.html#ixzz1PYz3Q8MA](http://www.kansascity.com/2011/06/16/2955100/company-charged-taking-contracts.html#ixzz1PYz3Q8MA)>

## **OUR IMMIGRANT MARINES**

Roy Exum – Chattanooga - June 13, 2011

One was born in Nigeria and the other in Mexico, but when the second-highest award for valor in our nation's military treasure chest was pinned on two heroes Friday, let there be no doubt that Ademola Fabayo and Juan Rodriguez-Chavez are very much United States Marines.

Capt. Fabayo and Staff Sgt. Rodriguez-Chavez have just been awarded the Navy Cross for their individual and repeated acts of heroism during an intense firefight that occurred in the village of Ganjgal, Afghanistan, on Sept. 8, 2009. Another Marine, Cpl. Dakota Meyer, is being considered as a candidate for the nation's highest honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

But what warms your heart was explained by the Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus, as he presented the awards. "Neither of the recipients of the Navy Cross today was born in this country. But through their active service, both have demonstrated a deep and enduring love for the United States of America and a commitment to defend everything it represents."

<More at: [www.chattanooga.com/articles/article\\_203264.asp](http://www.chattanooga.com/articles/article_203264.asp)>

## 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	
7/3-7/6		York Fairgrounds, York PA	The Wall That Heals	BAE Systems	
7/14-7/17		Wrigley Field, Chicago IL	The Wall That Heals	Chicago Cubs	
7/15		San Diego CA	Resource Fair	Melvin Leslie <a href="mailto:mleslie.oaks1@gmail.com">mleslie.oaks1@gmail.com</a>	510-861-7801
7/15		Long Beach CA	Stand Down	Jennifer Grigoriou <a href="mailto:jgrigoriou@usvetsinc.org">jgrigoriou@usvetsinc.org</a>	562-388-8051
7/29		Ventura CA	Resource Fair	Claire L. Hope <a href="mailto:clhope@aol.com">clhope@aol.com</a>	805-987-3118
8/2		Minneapolis MN	Resource Fair	Nathaniel Saltz <a href="mailto:nsaltz@mac-v.org">nsaltz@mac-v.org</a>	612-726-1327
8/8-8/14		Broken Spoke Campground" Sturgis, SD	The Wall That Heals	Broken Spoke Saloon	
8/12		Grand Rapids MI	Stand Down	Richard McDonald <a href="mailto:Richard.Mcdonald2@va.gov">Richard.Mcdonald2@va.gov</a>	616-234-0220
8/18-8/21		Rimrock Auto Arena, Billings, MT	The Wall That Heals	County of Yellowstone	
8/20		Fairbanks AK	Stand Down	Nancy Smoyer <a href="mailto:nrsmoyer@alaska.edu">nrsmoyer@alaska.edu</a>	907-479-7940
9/10-9/11		Holiday Inn Mart Plaza Chicago, IL	Reunion staff and patients 3 <sup>rd</sup> Field Hospital Saigon	Duane Thompson <a href="mailto:Info@3field.rmhc.org">Info@3field.rmhc.org</a>	

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

## TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

### **VETERANS OFFICE NOT MEETING NEEDS, SPEAKERS SAY**

Noel Lyn Smith - Navajo Times Kaibeto, Ariz. - May 19, 2011

For Rosalita Chatter the opportunity to speak to a Navajo Nation president about the issues facing her Army veteran husband has been years in the making. At a town hall held here Monday, she had a lot to say about the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs, and most of it wasn't very complimentary. DNVA was established in 1972 to fund programs and services to benefit Navajo veterans. Like many Navajo veterans, Chatter's husband Harrison has spent years asking for financial assistance from the department only to be denied for one reason or another.

<More at: [www.navajotimes.com/news/2011/0511/051911veterans.php](http://www.navajotimes.com/news/2011/0511/051911veterans.php)>

### **VETERAN: 'VA IS PASSING THE BUCK' ON BENEFITS, SERVICES**

Kate Coil - Bluefield Daily Telegraph (WV) - May 30, 2011

BLUEFIELD — Despite assurances from officials, some local veterans maintain they are not receiving fair treatment and adequate care at the local Veterans Administration Medical Center. Sally Anderson, a Desert Storm veteran and Bluefield resident, was left 100 percent disabled from her service. Anderson said officials with the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Beckley have given false information regarding eligibility registration and services.

"We're very upset that they said we could just come down and apply for benefits," Anderson said. "That's not true. The VA is passing the buck on us veterans, especially the women. I got very upset when I saw what they said in [Monday's article]. They are just spreading more misinformation to veterans. They don't discuss eligibility with you. They just have you fill out forms and never get back to you. You'll call three months later with a question and they can't tell you because they say your paperwork is still being processed. I've got all my paperwork from the VA, and I can show that they've done this."

<More at: <http://bdtonline.com/local/x1886879567/Veteran-VA-is-passing-the-buck-on-benefits-services>>

### **NEW GUIDELINES ON FEAR-BASED PTSD**

A recent VA Compensation Service Bulletin (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/56836424/CPServiceBulletinApril2011>) sought to eliminate processing ambiguity relating to PTSD claims. Regional Offices nationwide have been largely critiqued because of erratic application of rating criteria. The current bulletins are intended in part to decrease the overall 23 percent of botched claims processing.

<More at: <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/06/fear-based-ptsd-criteria-explained/>>

## **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VOWS TO STEM SEX ABUSE**

Julie Sherwood - Staff Writer, Messenger Post (Rochester NY) June 10, 2011

The Department of Veterans Affairs said it is taking steps to better protect veterans following a congressional report this week revealing nearly 300 sexual assaults in VA facilities. Between 2007 and 2010, 284 sexual assaults occurred at VA residential programs and were reported by VA police, according to a report released by the Government Accountability Office., and many of the victims were patients. But the majority of these incidents were not reported to VA leadership or the VA inspector general, as required by federal law. <More at: [www.mpnow.com/features/x41283820/Department-of-Veterans-Affairs-vows-to-stem-sex-abuse](http://www.mpnow.com/features/x41283820/Department-of-Veterans-Affairs-vows-to-stem-sex-abuse)>

## **RURAL VETERANS STRUGGLE TO OBTAIN HEALTH CARE**

David Goldstein - McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Frank Munk earned his veteran's medical benefits more than four decades ago in Quang Tri province, a hard-fought, bloody piece of ground in Vietnam. Yet he doesn't always choose to use them.

The 64-year-old truck mechanic from western Kansas instead spends \$2,500 out of his own pocket on a private doctor for such things as hearing tests. It's either that or drive nearly 300 miles to a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital in Wichita or Denver.

"I can't afford to take two days off," said Munk, who's self-employed. "The VA care is getting cost-prohibitive for people in the rural areas because of the time, and a lot of them can't drive themselves."

Other veterans who live beyond America's cities and suburbs share Munk's dilemma. Long distances and restrictive rules have become obstacles to health care for many of the more than 3 million rural veterans enrolled in the VA health system. They account for 41 percent of enrollees. <More at: [http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2015297097\\_ruralvets12.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2015297097_ruralvets12.html)>

## **HE MAY BE RIGHT, BUT WHO ELSE IS GOING TO DO IT? NOT MANY OUT THERE CARE. SOLDIERS' MENTAL HEALTH CAN'T BE TREATED BY VA ALONE, EXPERT SAYS**

Joe Nickell - The Missoulian - June 11, 2011

Given today's frequent media focus on the psychological wounds of war, one might assume that soldiers who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and other post-deployment mental health issues would come home to a welcoming web of support networks and resources. But it's that very assumption that hamstring much important work, says Dr. Michael Marks, a former Missoula psychologist who now serves as the lead psychologist and director of the PTSD Outpatient Clinic of the Southern Arizona Veterans Affairs Health Care System.

"Too often, for all kinds of reasons, when people find out someone's a veteran, it's like, 'Let the VA deal with it,'" says Marks. "But we don't have enough people; we can't treat everyone, and a lot of veterans don't want to come to the VA anyway."

<More at: [http://missoulian.com/news/local/article\\_0daf0c96-93e4-11e0-aa1e-001cc4c002e0.html](http://missoulian.com/news/local/article_0daf0c96-93e4-11e0-aa1e-001cc4c002e0.html)>

## **THE FOLLOWING TWO STORIES WERE IN THE STARS & STRIPES UNDER THE HEADING "ONE ARMY, TWO FAILURES"**

### **OVERLOOKED AND CUT LOOSE BY THE ARMY, VETERAN'S LIFE SPIRALS TO AN END**

Bill Murphy Jr. - Stars and Stripes - June 7, 2011

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — By last September, the Army had had just about enough of infantryman Jacob Andrews, so it gave him a general discharge and a one-way bus ticket home to Kansas City.

He had plenty to think about on the 30-hour trip from Fort Drum, N.Y. There were the alcohol-fueled mistakes that had led to the end of his military career, and the memories of good friends who had been killed the year before in Afghanistan. There was, in particular, his horrific discovery of the body of one friend who had been crushed to death in a Humvee accident. There was the night back at Fort Drum when he'd tried to commit suicide.

<More at: [www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/overlooked-and-cut-loose-by-the-army-veteran-s-life-spirals-to-an-end-1.145953](http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/overlooked-and-cut-loose-by-the-army-veteran-s-life-spirals-to-an-end-1.145953)>

## **MALTREATED AND HAZED, ONE SOLDIER IS DRIVEN TO TAKE HIS OWN LIFE**

Megan McCloskey - Stars and Stripes - June 7, 2011

For Army Spc. Brushaun Anderson, there was no escaping his torment. The senior noncommissioned officers who ruled his life at a remote patrol base in Iraq ordered him to wear a plastic trash bag because they said he was "dirty."

They forced him to perform excessive physical exercises in his body armor over and over again. They made him build a sandbag wall that served no military purpose.

Anderson seemed to take it all in stride. Until New Year's Day 2010, when the once-eager 20-year-old soldier locked himself inside a portable toilet, picked up his M4 rifle, aimed the barrel at his forehead and pulled the trigger.

<More at: [www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941](http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941)>

## **ACCORDING TO THE VA'S OWN FIGURES, THIS WILL LEAVE ONLY 19 OUT OF 20 HOMELESS VETERANS WITHOUT SHELTER. GREAT IMPROVEMENT!**

### **UNUSED & UNDERUSED VA BUILDINGS TO BE DEVELOPED**

WASHINGTON – June 8, 2011 - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues to develop housing opportunities for homeless and at-risk Veterans by adding 34 VA locations across the country. This strategy will increase the Department's available beds by over 5,000. VA currently has 15,000 transitional beds available to homeless Veterans.

"This initiative will significantly support our efforts to eliminate Veteran homelessness and improve quality of life for Veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We have a moral obligation to ensure that Veterans and their families have access to affordable housing and medical services that will help them get back on their feet."

<More at: <http://vato21stcentury.blogspot.com/2011/06/va-to-expand-housing-for-homeless.html>>

### **MUGGING GRIEVING SURVIVORS**

Col. Steve Strobridge - USAF-Ret. - 2011/06/09

For an example of inconsistency of laws governing different federal agencies, look no further than the way the law treats survivors of disabled veterans versus those of military retirees. A few years ago, there was a general outrage when Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee leaders discovered the VA hadn't complied with laws requiring the VA to pay survivors the VA disability compensation due for the month in which their disabled veteran spouse died. Instead, the VA persisted for years in electronically recouping the final month's payment from the survivor's checking account.

... Several years after forcing an end to recoupments against VA survivors, Congress still has done nothing to stop DoD from recouping the final month's military retired pay from unsuspecting survivors.

<More at: [www.moaa.org/action/lac\\_asiseeit/action\\_asiseeit\\_2011/action\\_asiseeit\\_110609.htm](http://www.moaa.org/action/lac_asiseeit/action_asiseeit_2011/action_asiseeit_110609.htm)>

### **CASEY UNVEILS REPORT ON VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT**

The News Eagle - Pittsburgh, Pa - Jun 01, 2011

U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), Chairman of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), released a JEC report today detailing the high unemployment rate among Post-9/11 veterans and examining ways to help veterans bridge the gap between military service and civilian employment.

... The report found that the unemployment rate among Post-9/11 veterans in April was 10.9 percent, compared to the overall veteran-unemployment rate of 7.7 percent. <More at: [www.neagle.com/news/x530602949/Casey-Unveils-Report-on-Veteran-Unemployment](http://www.neagle.com/news/x530602949/Casey-Unveils-Report-on-Veteran-Unemployment)>

### **TROUBLED VETERANS AND EARLY DEATHS AFTER IRAQ**

Aaron Glantz - NY Times - May 28, 2011

This month, the Department of Veterans Affairs informed the parents of William Hamilton, an Iraq war veteran, that it was not responsible for his death. Mr. Hamilton had been admitted nine times to a V.A. psychiatric ward in Palo Alto. He saw demon women and talked to a man he had killed in Iraq. His parents allege that the V.A. illegally turned away Mr. Hamilton — three days before he stepped in front of train on May 16, 2010, at the age of 26. The agency denied the wrongful-death claim in a one-page letter: "The VA did not breach a legal duty," wrote Suzanne C. Will, the agency's regional counsel in San Francisco.

<More at: [www.nytimes.com/2011/05/29/us/29bcveterans.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/29/us/29bcveterans.html)>

## BENEFITS RESTORED TO VIETNAM VETERAN

Will Doolittle -- Poststar.com (Glen Falls NY) - June 17, 2011 5:34 pm

FORT EDWARD -- Officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs have responded to a recent series of stories in The Post-Star about the plight of a Vietnam veteran whose benefit payments were cut off by reviewing the man's case, then restoring his payments at a higher level. The VA also determined the veteran, Charles Cooley, 67, of Tori Trace, was owed five and a half years' worth of back payments. A check for the back payments was deposited Thursday in the bank account of Cooley and his wife, Dolores, 66. Their first monthly compensation check for \$2,800, which is the 100 percent disability level, was also deposited Thursday in their account. <More at: [http://poststar.com/news/local/article\\_0888c432-992a-11e0-b39d-001cc4c002e0.html](http://poststar.com/news/local/article_0888c432-992a-11e0-b39d-001cc4c002e0.html) >

## HOUSE REPUBLICANS REQUEST 'DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL' DELAY

Charles Hoskinson - 6/17/11

House Republicans are asking President Barack Obama to hold off on allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military, saying it would be "premature" to do so now. The letter from 29 lawmakers delivered Friday to the White House comes as legislative efforts have fizzled to block or stall implementation of the repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that prevented gays and lesbians from serving openly. The repeal, enacted in December, requires Obama, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen to certify that the military is ready for the change, triggering a 60-day waiting period. Gates has indicated that he would do so before leaving office at the end of this month if Mullen and the other joint chiefs tell him they're ready. <More at: [www.politico.com/news/stories/0611/57235.html#ixzz1PerDRNvy](http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0611/57235.html#ixzz1PerDRNvy) >

## TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

### OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 19 JUNE 2011

#### OP'N IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,721/292 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,427/36
WOUNDED US [5/31/11]	31,931/172
OTHER US CASUALTIES [5/31/11]	40,422/1,354
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [5/31/11]	223/4
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 [6/19/11]	≥ 110,721–1,455,590
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

#### OP'N ENDURING FREEDOM (3,543 DAYS)

KILLED US	1,623
WOUNDED US [5/31/11]	11,722
OTHER CASUALTIES US [5/31/11]	13,474
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [5/31/11]	60
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED COALITION	881
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	\$831,897,126,997
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$425,273,767,091

*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 MAY 10, 2011

This week the Navy announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard, announced an increase. The net collective result is 545 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 70,155; Navy Reserve, 5,462; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 9,906; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,988, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 801. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 92,312, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated is on line at [www.defense.gov/news/d20110510ngr.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/d20110510ngr.pdf).

## AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

**OLD TECHNIQUES, EVEN WHEN PROVIDED BY MODERN TECHNOLOGY, ARE STILL OLD TECHNIQUES. COME ON, PEOPLE, GET WITH IT!**

### SOLDIERS NIX TELE-SHRINKS

Bob Brewin - 05/20/11

While top Army commanders have embraced tele-behavioral health technology as a way to connect shrinks and soldiers based in combat outposts, the troops don't think much of the idea.

In an appendix to its Mental Health Assessment Team report released yesterday, the Army said both troops and health care providers reported difficulty in establishing the kind of personal connection needed for effective treatment over a video conferencing system already deployed in Afghanistan.

When asked about the system, one soldier said, "Why can't the dude [health care provider] show up where I'm at?" and then used an expletive to drive home his thoughts on tele-behavioral health.

[http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2011/05/soldiers\\_nix\\_tele-shrinks.php](http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2011/05/soldiers_nix_tele-shrinks.php)

### AFTER A DECADE IN MILITARY PRISON, INNOCENT MAN STILL WANTS TO SERVE

Michael Doyle - McClatchy Newspapers - 06.12.11

WASHINGTON -- Brian Foster is back on the beat, against all odds.

Foster, 37, is a Marine Corps gunnery sergeant and a military policeman. He says he may even be a better cop for his ordeal - spending nearly a decade in Leavenworth for a crime he didn't commit.

"I think the prison time actually benefited me," Foster said. "When I go on calls now, I don't make assumptions; I look around more."

The Detroit native has served nearly 19 years in the Marine Corps, more than half of them as an inmate unjustly incarcerated at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Now he's hoping to extend his military career, and has applied to be a warrant officer.

Foster currently is a watch commander for the military police unit responsible for law enforcement at Marine Corps Base Quantico. The sprawling facility, 35 miles south of Washington, trains officers like those who once put him away. <More at: [www.miamiherald.com/2011/06/12/2262809/after-a-decade-in-military-prison.html#ixzz1P6hHdH8w](http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/06/12/2262809/after-a-decade-in-military-prison.html#ixzz1P6hHdH8w)>

## ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

### 2012 RETIREE COLA UPDATE

Terry Howell – Military Advantage - May 20, 2011 •

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the national inflation rate is still trending upward. Of course anyone who has been grocery shopping lately could tell you that, but, the BLS reports that the Consumer Price Index for April is up 0.8 percent over the March CPI, which bodes well for COLA in 2012. This is important for military retirees, and those drawing VA benefits, because the CPI is the indicator used to determine the annual cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) and adjustments to VA Disability and Compensation, Vets Pension, and other VA rates for the following year.

<More at: <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/05/2012-military-retiree-cola-update/#ixzz1NNmdbCQ0>>

## **SCAMMERS TARGET MILITARY FAMILIES**

Paula Fleming - The MetroWest Daily News (Framingham MA) - Jun 12, 2011

Members of the military protect us at home and abroad, but unscrupulous con artists often target military families, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) warns.

Too often, military service members and their families fall victim to scammers who target their unique lifestyle. Since 2004, BBB Military Line has provided assistance to military communities with a variety of consumer-related issues that are specially tailored to support their needs.

BBB Military Line ([www.bbb.org/us/Military](http://www.bbb.org/us/Military)) provides free resources, such as financial literacy information, access to Better Business services and scam alerts for all branches of the military.

The following are some of the scams directed at service members:

- High-priced military loans
- Veterans benefits buyout plans
- Fake rental properties
- Phony jury duty summons
- Misleading car sales
- Expensive life insurance policies

<More at: [www.metrowestdailynews.com/archive/x607302836/Scammers-target-military-families#ixzz1P6hk3lqz](http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/archive/x607302836/Scammers-target-military-families#ixzz1P6hk3lqz)>

### **I RECEIVED THIS FROM VOTEVET.ORG**

With the unemployment rate around 8 percent for veterans and 12 percent for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, we wanted to pass along this great opportunity for employment for you or any other veteran you know who needs work. Recently, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) negotiated a collective bargaining agreement with the US Postal Service that helps ensure thousands of new job opportunities for veterans.

... The Postal Workers Union has put together a short tutorial to help you locate and apply for positions as they become available. Since the APWU has published its tutorial, the USPS has in fact started recruitment, so it's very important that you look at the tutorial right away and follow the union's advice.

... Following the steps laid out in the link below will help you avoid missing any employment opportunities. If you don't find a position in your area it is equally important not to get discouraged and to continue conducting frequent searches - the union anticipates hiring will be sporadic at times but expects opportunities to continually occur.

**CLICK HERE** <http://org2.democracynaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=4tOZC7E0UN2irluLpScRj6aEGC6jEHus> **TO READ THE POSTAL WORKERS UNION TUTORIAL ON GETTING POSTAL SERVICE JOBS**

### **MEMORIES ANYONE?**

#### **COMING AND GOING TO VIETNAM: A 1970 DOCUMENTARY**

CBS News May 26, 2011 3:57 PM

In 1970, five years after the troop buildup in the Vietnam War began, American servicemen were still being drafted and shipped to war at the rate of about 12 planeloads a week. At the time, the entire country was gnarled in a great debate over the war and whether the sacrifice of these young Americans was worth the fight. So, Mike Wallace boarded a commercial Super DC-8, chartered by the military and bound for Bien Hoa airport near what was then called Saigon, to ask the freshly drafted soldiers what they thought of this war they were told to fight.

After they arrived, he boarded a plane back to the U.S. with a group of war-weary troops who just finished their year-long tour in Vietnam. The result is a fascinating documentary-style look at the soldier's state-of-mind in 1970

America. See the video at: [www.cbsnews.com/8301-504803\\_162-20066518-10391709.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504803_162-20066518-10391709.html)

**NOTICE**

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

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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.

The phone is covered by a voice recorder 24 hours a day. We'll get back to you ASAP.