

SIT-REP

Situation Normal: All Fraq'd Up

A Publication of Iraq Veterans Against the War - IVAW.ORG

Servicemembers have the right to keep one copy of this or any publication in their possession. (DoD directive 1325.6)

SACRIFICIAL LAMB

In times past, war meant sacrifice. Food rations, consumer goods, scrap metal, fathers and sons, life and limb. Battles were won not so much with weaponry, but through the willingness of a people to gut itself in the name of victory. (*Adbusters, Jan/Feb 2007*)

Fortunately, this nation has been able to move past such nasty forms of warfare. We've managed to create a situation where less than one percent of the population shoulders one-hundred percent of the burden. For most Americans, the occupation of Iraq is a spectator sport, requiring no material sacrifice whatsoever. They can easily put it out of their minds and carry on with lives, completely undisturbed by the fact that there's a fraqing war going on.

While the majority of this country's population remains mind-numbingly apathetic, the

government is doing its best to screw veterans out of their rightfully-earned benefits. This past Monday, I went to my regional VA office in order to refile my claim (after they "lost my paperwork" the first time). There are currently over six hundred thousand backlogged claims waiting to be adjudicated by the VA, with an average wait-time of 177 days; the very least those ass-dragging, paper-pushing, chairborne desk jockeys can do is move with a sense of purpose. In 2006, a sum total of \$368 million was given to senior executives of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (who have their own lobbying group) in the form of annual bonuses; not money (as the President would say) "to put food on their families," but bonuses averaging a payout of over sixteen grand each. By comparison, the amount of supplemental funding granted

by Congress to the VA for the year 2007 was less than half that amount, \$150 million.

As I sit here and write this, a brigade of soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division is preparing for deployment to Iraq, many of them will be going there for the second or third time. We wish them the best of luck, and hope and pray for their safe return. We promise to keep up the struggle while they're gone, to continue working towards our objective of bringing all the troops home alive and providing them with the support and care that they deserve.

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The goal of this publication is to provide an open outlet for servicemembers and recent veterans to express their opinions and share their experiences in a non-censored environment.

Submissions and feedback: editor@ivaw.org

IVAW
Attn: Sit-Rep
P.O. Box 8296
Philadelphia, PA 19101

THE FIG LEAF

by Adam Kokesh

At the outset of the war, I felt that the invasion of Iraq was uncalled for. As a reservist attending Claremont McKenna College near Los Angeles, I joined the big day of student walkouts in February of 2003. There were speeches, a human peace sign, and a march through the middle of campus. I found myself surrounded by students and professors trying to relive the 60s, their apparent ignorance surpassed only by their lack of hygiene.

At my unit's monthly drill in December of 2003, the commander announced that the Marine Corps was seeking volunteers for the 3rd Civil Affairs Group. I jumped at the chance. I didn't want to "miss the party." I also believed at that time, along with most of America, that we were cleaning up our mess in Iraq. I thought it was responsible foreign policy, trying to do some good for the Iraqi people.

I was activated two weeks before we were set to deploy. In between filling out forms and checking out gear, I got enough civil affairs training to learn that we would be working with the Iraqi people on local projects such as schools, clinics, and water facilities. I was really excited about it. That was exactly what Bush was saying the

Americans were doing in Iraq. I thought, "We are going to be leading the charge to rebuild Iraq." (To Marines, every mission is a "charge." Marines are often tasked with leading the charge to clean the heads, or swab the decks, or stand around and smoke cigarettes.)

When I got to Iraq, it was a different story. We were six-man teams attached to battalions or regiments; and where we were in the Fallujah area, you couldn't go anywhere without at least six HMMWVs. We often had to beg the infantry commanders to tag along on their convoys in order to accomplish our missions. We found ourselves constantly struggling to justify our existence. We even came up with a slogan: We care, so that you don't have to.

Sure, it was funny at the time; but in retrospect, it's pretty messed up. Perhaps if the situation had been the other way, if infantry units were attached to civil affairs teams, then the US military would have had some credibility with the Iraqi people when we told them that we were there to help them. Instead, we put the killers in charge. I'm not advocating a complete restructuring of the military here. Ours is the greatest military on earth, but it is designed to destroy other

nations' militaries. In the words of Jason Lemieux, "Hammers can't fix computers."

The only way that I can describe the role of civil affairs in the occupation of Iraq is that it is a fig leaf. I was once praised for taking pictures of my team distributing humanitarian rations because they would be used in a propaganda magazine that would be distributed to Iraqis. I don't believe it had much effect, (the Iraqi people know better,) but it felt like we were there more so that commanders could brag about all of the good we were doing than to actually do any good.

We cared so that they didn't have to - so that the infantry commanders didn't have to, so that the Joint Chiefs of Staff didn't have to, so that L. Paul Bremer (Director of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance until the "handover of power" on June 28th of 2004) didn't have to, so that Donald Rumsfeld didn't have to, so that Dick Cheney didn't have to, not that he ever pretended to; and so that least of all, President Bush didn't have to care while he gushed about making life better for the Iraqi people. I risked my life so that they could look good, and they still failed. We were a fig leaf.

VETERANS EXPOSED TO DEPLETED URANIUM: CHAPTER 54 OF VETERANS FOR PEACE NEEDS YOU

The Santa Barbara chapter of VFP is offering to help represent veterans who have been exposed to depleted uranium radiation and are suffering from cancer or other side effects. The chapter has expertise in medical and administrative law. Dr. A. I. Holtz, MD, has seven years of experience on the rating board in the Los Angeles office.

The chapter has started a program and done research to develop a brief for presentation to the VA rating board in order to obtain service connection disability for affected veterans. OEF and OIF vets are encouraged to get in touch with them for more information on this project.

Contact the chapter with any questions: vfpsb@vfpsb.org

Interview with a Marine Squad Leader in Iraq *by A.A.P*

It was 2157 when my phone rang. I knew from the unusual phone number I saw on my caller ID that it was him.

"Hello?" I answered. He replied with an exhausted "Hi, it's me", in reply. There are, most of the time, five to ten minute intervals of airtime allowed before his satellite phone automatically disconnects itself. It was many brief dialogues pieced together that made the roughly twenty minutes of conversation we had.

After we had both assured one that the other was doing well, I began to ask this Marine infantryman of nine years a few questions. Not knowing what answers from him to expect, I was surprised by the blunt honesty I had gotten.

A.A.P.: "So, what, without compromising your and your Marines' security, have you been doing over there?"

Marine: "Nothing. Not much, I mean."

A.A.P.: "Not much? That's surprising."

Marine: "Well, we haven't taken much fire since we've been here is what I mean. It's fraqing hot; I'm tired ... 18 hour patrols ... we all just want to go home. It's time for us to go home now, that's what we've decided."

A.A.P.: "What are your patrols like?"

Marine: "Well, I said we don't take much small arms fire, but IEDs are everywhere. So basically, we drive around all day waiting to get blown up, makes no sense."

A.A.P.: "So, do you think what you're doing in Iraq is bullshit?"

Marine: "Yes."

A.A.P.: "Do you think the war's bullshit?"

Marine: "Yes."

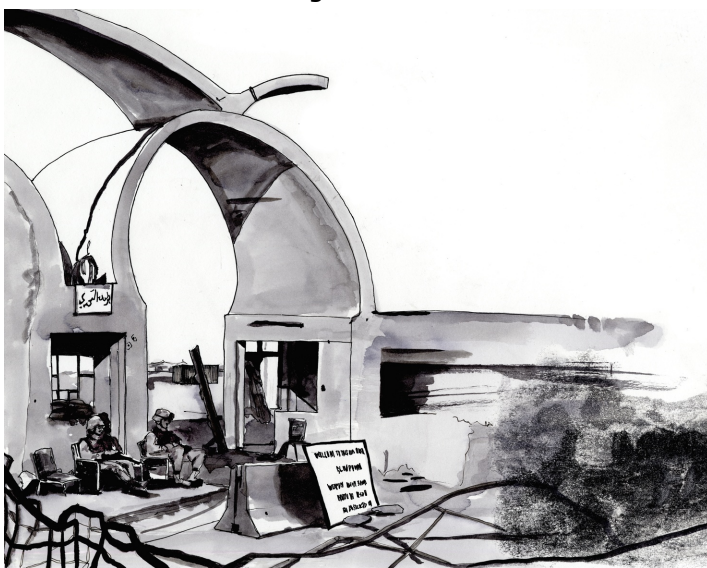
A.A.P.: "I mean, by going home, do you mean never coming back to Iraq as a whole?"

Marine: "Yes ... one more month ..."

After our brief interview, which was interrupted many times with poor reception and timers, we concluded our formal conversation with timelines of his unit's forthcoming departure and transition. He sounded drunk from lack of sleep and nourishment when he spoke. Yet through all his anger and bitterness, I heard no signs of confusion or wavering in his responses. Though brief, this interview is an important look – in real time – without the luxury of hindsight, into one Marine's experiences on the front lines of the occupation in Iraq.

A bird knows no barbed wire

**Tired
Dust covered
Waiting
Convoy clearance**



Talil Airbase - Drawing and poem by Aaron Hughes, IVAW Chicago chapter

**Three weeks gone
Lost dusk in western Iraq
IED on MSR Tampa
A bird flying in and out of barbed wire**



FILM REVIEW: The Ground Truth

by Justin Cliburn

The Ground Truth tells the story of seventeen Iraq War veterans, but it serves as more than that; these seventeen stories are just a microcosm of the problems America's war veterans are facing everyday. The seventeen soldiers and Marines are an eclectic group; they represent all regions of the country, all races and colors. Their motivations for enlistment are diverse, as are the ways with which they have dealt with their war experiences. This is a melting pot. This is America.

Your first glimpse of the military in this documentary is the same as the veterans' in the film - recruit induction day, complete with all the pomp and circumstance that it entails. Start learning about the war by learning what motivated these young Americans to join the military and, ultimately, participate in the war. There are many reasons why people join the military, from duty to honor to college money to job training to a desire to leave the comfort zone; no one says they want to kill someone. That desire is learned, and you are given a crash course in the sociology of training our brothers and sisters to kill. It is not what you see in the recruiting advertisements on television.

Our narrators found themselves in different cities in Iraq, performing different missions, but having the same conflicting thoughts about their role in what they were witnessing. Innocent civilians

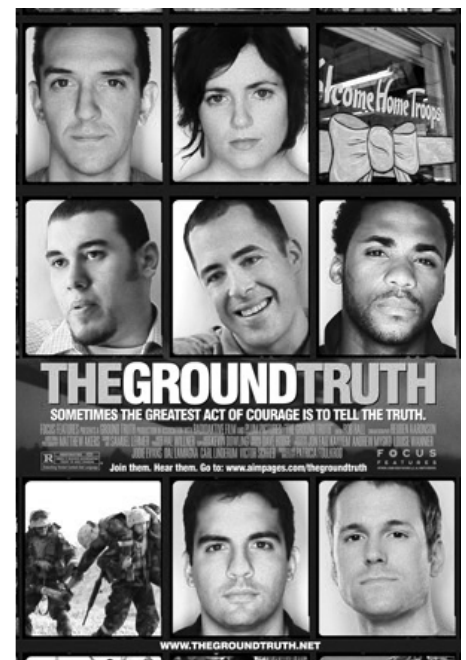
were shot and killed, Iraqi men were humiliated for the purpose of intimidation, children were dead on the side of the road. These weren't acts carried out by monsters; this is what happens when you train an animal to fight and then lock it in a cage. Soldiers and Marines give personal accounts of atrocities they witnessed or even committed, and it becomes easy to understand how war has changed them.

When the soldiers and Marines were not witnessing the horrors of war on the civilian population of Iraq, they were busy crafting their own armor and wondering when they were going to see the best military equipment in the world. For two of the soldiers, the wait was too long and limbs were lost as a result. Sadly, the Department of Defense officially listed them as "wounded," just as they classify anyone missing an arm or a leg as merely being wounded. Regretfully, these soldiers can count themselves as lucky: at least the VA can see their wounds.

Of the thousands of servicemembers who return from Iraq with PTSD, most of them will never receive help. For those who do seek help from the VA, some are flat-out denied service while others are diagnosed with a previously unknown "personality disorder," effectively ending their military careers and completely dashing any chance of them receiving disability compensation or mental health treatment from

the Veterans' Administration. The military that worked so hard to condition the personality of a Marine to kill without thinking abandons the man once he starts to think about what he's done. The Marine Corps turned him from a civilian into a killer; once he becomes a civilian again, he is useless.

In a very political time in our history, on a subject that can be very political, The Ground Truth never once uses the words: Bush, Republican, Democrat, Saddam, or Conspiracy. This is simply about the soldiers and Marines; what they saw, what they did, and what they encountered when they returned home. There is nothing with which to disagree, it is a film of facts and emotion. You might become angry, you might find yourself sad; but whether you scream or cry, you will know the story of the American Veteran . . . You will know The Ground Truth.



Tragedy and Hope: Jeff Lucey's Legacy

by Jared Hood

When does war end? To many of those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, it never does. Even in the most minor cases, Veterans of the "War on Terror" are tormented with feelings of alienation and fear when they attempt to blend back into society. In the extreme cases, alienation and fear are the least of their worries. In Lance Corporal Jeffrey Lucey's case, the war became worse when he returned home. His death was the outcome of his own psychological battle that, after being ignored by the VA, led to his suicide.

When Jeffrey Lucey, a 23 year old Marine Corps veteran, returned home from Iraq in 2003, his battle not only became worse for him, but those closest to him soon found themselves on the "frontlines" trying to help him fight his internal "enemies." His parents, Joyce and Kevin Lucey, stated that shortly after Jeff returned home he became a very different person. They noticed that he was vomiting often, waking up with horrific nightmares, and drinking alcohol quite heavily. But Jeff didn't say anything and claimed that these symptoms were normal; the vomiting was due to stomach aches, the nightmares weren't related to combat, and the drinking was just his way of enjoying himself after a long and miserable deployment to Iraq. But soon things became worse, sometime around Christmas of

2003 he had an altercation with his sister and threw a pair of dog-tags at her, saying "Don't you understand it? I'm a murderer!" At the time, none of his family members had any idea what he was talking about. Jeff had been ordered to shoot two unarmed Iraqi PUC's while serving on a Marine Task Force mission, after which he plucked their dog-tags; not as a trophy, but to honor the memory of these men.

Jeff then began talking to his family and friends, telling them that he had "picked out the rope and tree from which he planned to hang himself." The family persuaded him to admit himself to a VA clinic on May 28th of 2004. After being committed for only three days he was released, two days later he totaled the family car. This, his parents believe, was a suicide attempt. Once again, they persuaded him to return to the VA on June 5th, only to be refused treatment by them. A VA staff member told him that no psychiatrist was available to meet with him. On June 22nd, family members found him in the basement, hanging from a garden hose.

Joyce and Kevin Lucey filed a lawsuit on July 27th this year. The medical malpractice suit claims that the VA is to blame for the death of their son. They're not asking for money; the lawsuit challenges the VA and federal government to rethink their methods of treating returning veterans.



USMC LCpl Jeffrey M. Lucey

"How can you put a price on a life?" Kevin Lucy said. The real purpose of the lawsuit is to put pressure on our Government so that they may be able to recognize the failing VA system and fix it before it becomes worse and more veterans of the Occupation of Iraq take their own lives.

For many veterans who return, our demons are easily deterred with minimal counseling and assistance; but the federal government cannot just look at those minor cases and quickly determine that no such thing as PTSD exists. For Jeff Lucey, an honorable devil-dog who served proudly, life was too difficult to handle with those demons living inside him. We have all had different experiences in our service; and for those of us who suffer from PTSD, only we know the

severity of the symptoms. But when we take that step, when we make the difficult and conflicting decision to seek help, the least we can expect from our government is adequate assistance; not only for PTSD, but for all of the other treatment and benefits we rightly deserve.

Jeffrey Lucey did not get a military funeral, at least not one recognized by the DoD.

Because only in this twisted reality will the Department of Defense, acting on behalf of our government officials, send men and women to fight and die, only to ignore them when and if they return. Jeffrey Lucey will always be a devil-dog, he will always be a proud Marine... And to me, the DoD and our government officials will always be the armchair quarterbacks who unflinchingly

lead American Soldiers to death, PTSD or suicide and then deny any wrongdoing on their own behalf. Jeffrey Lucey is a hero and his parents, Joyce and Kevin Lucey are heroes for taking a stand and pointing out that which needs to change. This is only a step in reconstructing a despicable VA system, but it is nonetheless a tragic and eye-opening one.

Since my discharge from the Army back in 2005, I have been compiling a list of civilians' frequently asked stupid questions. My personal favorite is, "Oh, you were in Iraq? How was it?"

That's all they ask; not about how it felt to be fighting a war that's illegal, unconstitutional, unjustifiable, and (quite frankly, ignoring all that claptrap and viewing it purely from a military strategic perspective) completely unwinnable; not about how I've been getting along since my return; not even the ignorant and childish "How many people did you kill?" The only question they can come up with, after being informed that I spent a year of my life in a shithole that they've only heard about in the media (if even that), is "How was it?"

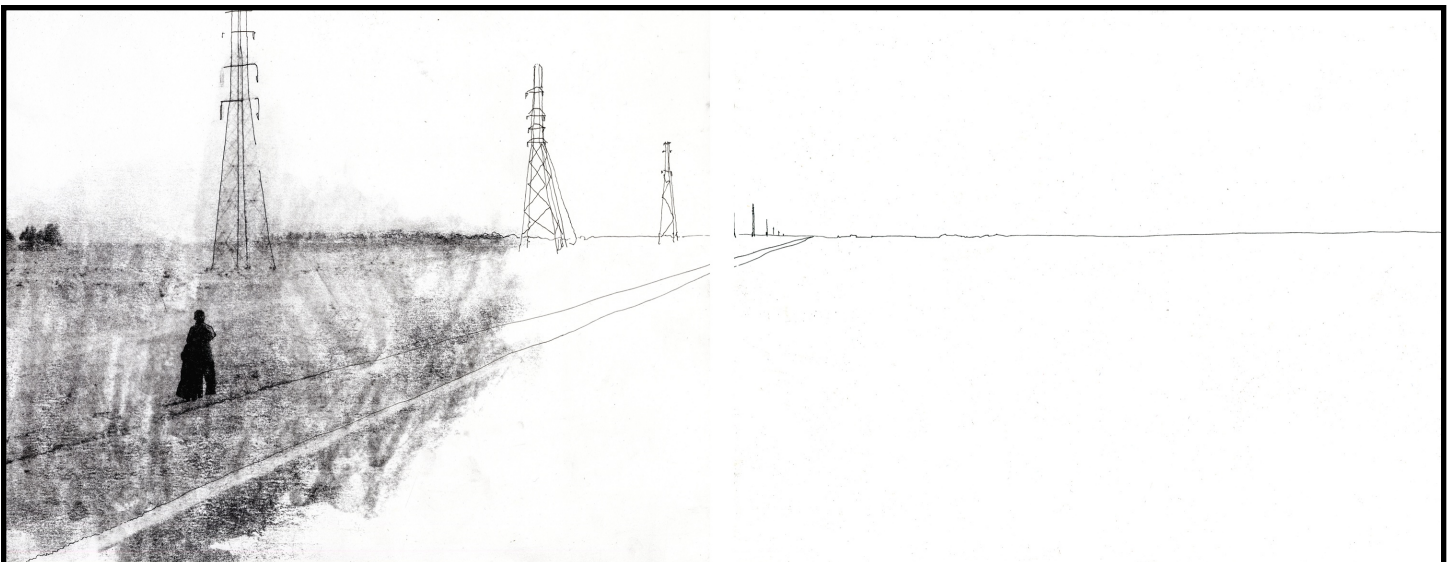
As if I had just informed them that I went to the beach last Saturday, or that I spent two weeks on vacation in the Bahamas; they ask

"How was it?" As if, after nearly half a decade of war, they're still not informed enough to ask a more relevant and pointed question than "How was it?" As if they are convinced that I am even capable of condensing the experiences of the most traumatic (yet most educational) year of my life into the two or three short phrases that their limited attention spans can handle...

What the fraq are they expecting me to say? That it was a wonderful and joyous experience? That we all held hands and sang Kumbaya while "winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people" or whatever the hell it was that we were supposed to be doing there?

It was hot, there was dust in my food, my clothes, my asscrack...

Oh yeah, and your freedumb is not worth my blood.



Truck driving in Iraq. The horizon always in front of us, moving back as we move forward. The horizon just like hope in this desert stepping back as I step forward.

APPEAL FOR REDRESS FROM THE WAR IN IRAQ

Many active duty, reserve, and guard servicemembers are concerned about the war in Iraq and support the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The Appeal for Redress provides a UCMJ authorized means through which individual servicemembers can urge their member of Congress to end to the U.S. military occupation. The appeal has already reached thousands of servicemembers who seek redress from the war. The initial appeal messages were delivered to members of Congress on January 16, 2007. The Appeal for Redress will continue to be delivered to Congress until all our brothers and sisters come home from Iraq. The wording of the appeal is short, simple, and to the point. It is patriotic and respectful in tone.

Clip and send to:

**Appeal for Redress
P.O. Box 53052
Washington, DC 20009**

Members of the military have a legal right to communicate with their member of Congress. Article 4.1 of DoD Directive 7050.6, the Military Whistleblower Protection Act, states that "Members of the Armed Forces shall be free to make a protected communication to a member of Congress." Attorneys and counselors experienced in military law are available to help servicemembers who need assistance in countering any attempts to suppress this communication.

<http://appealforredress.org>

(360) 241-1414

Appeal for Redress

As a patriotic American proud to serve my nation in uniform, I respectfully urge my political leaders in Congress to support the prompt withdrawal of all American military forces and bases from Iraq. Staying in Iraq will not work and is not worth the price. It is time for U.S. troops to come home now.

The information you submit will be sent to members of Congress and the Senate. The appeal's organizers will not release your information to any other individual or organization.

Please indicate your duty status: Active Duty___ Active Reserve or National Guard___ IRR___

First Name: _____ MI: ___ Last Name: _____

Secure non-military e-mail address: _____

Duty Station: _____ Home ZIP Code: _____

Have you served in the Iraq Theater? Yes___ No___

Branch of Service: _____ Rank: _____

GIs - KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

GIs have the legal right to:

Consult with a congressional office, civilian counselor or service, or a lawyer about a problem.

Appeal any court-martial conviction, discharge denial, or non-judicial punishment.

Say what they think and feel about the military, and participate in peaceful demonstrations when they're off-duty, out of uniform, off-post, and in the U.S.A. (DoD Directive 1325.6)

Request redress from their Commanding Officer for any grievance, and write a formal complaint against their CO if redress is not granted. (Article 138, UCMJ)

Call for information from a network of nonprofit, non-governmental organizations. The service is free. The call is confidential.

The GI Rights Hotline 800-394-9544

Overseas number:
215-563-4620

<http://girights.org>

girights@objector.org

Remember: Rights are not given, they are fought for and exercised.

SEPTEMBER IVAW EVENTS

Boston Chapter

Film Screenings: **In the Valley of Elah**, a movie that hits home for many of us, followed by panel discussion with IVAW members. 7pm, free for veterans.

6th, Kendall Sq. Theatre
10th, Boston Common AMC
14th, Harvard Sq. Theatre

Meeting for vets with a representative from MA Dept. of Veterans' Services. Every Monday - Vet Center, 665 Beacon St.

Film Screening: **Operation Homecoming**, a powerful PBS film about soldiers' experiences in Iraq
10th, 7pm - Boston College

Chicago Chapter

In an effort to illuminate the need for funding of VA Hospitals, challenge the continued funding of the occupation, and show grass roots support for veterans; members will be serving free coffee and snacks at the VA Hospital in Chicago.
7th, 11am-2pm

Burlington Chapter

Burlington Labor Day Parade and Celebration
3rd, Starting 10am at Burlington College, 95 North Ave.

Progressive Peace Picnic
8th, Oakledge Park in Burlington

DC Chapter

Hijacking of ANSWER Coalition's anti-war protest. Come for the rally, stay for a week of direct action. IVAW and VFP members ride on ANSWER's buses for free.
Rally on the 15th
20th, Veterans' lobbying day
<http://sept15.org>

Philly Chapter

Stage Production: **What I Heard About Iraq**, followed by panel discussion with IVAW members.
9th, 10th, 11th, The Rotunda, 4014 Walnut St.

Ft. Drum Chapter

Sendoff show for our deploying troops.
1st, 6pm, Different Drummer

IVAW National

IVAW Benefit CD Release Party
14th, Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave E
Vienna, VA

Start of month-long truth in recruiting campaign
September 17th

War is a racket.
A few profit and the many pay.

- USMC Maj. Gen. Smedley D. Butler