



SIT-REP

Situation Normal: All Fraq'd Up

ISSUE #5

Memorial Day, 2008

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)*

A Nation Remembers *by Matthis Chiroux*

With Memorial Day here, and summer following in its wake, there's an air of energy growing on the streets in front of my Brooklyn apartment that's undeniable. New life is circulating in the city's tree skeletons, and its human occupants are spilling from their apartments to air out the must of a New York City winter under an ever-warming sun.

I almost feel bad to remind them of the ever-growing reason for what should be a very somber season.

Death in service to our country; the ultimate sacrifice any servicemember can make, and what we remember and honor as Americans on this terribly sobering day. The count stands at well over 1.2 million and spans wars from the American Revolution to the current war in Iraq.

When I stare backward into history, and I think of my sisters and brothers who served before me, it's hard not to feel overwhelmed by the history of our profession and the sacrifice it requires from so many.

On Memorial Day, I remember the many faces of the fallen, and I remember the common bond we all share in offering our

lives for the benefit of the nation.

I remember 1.2 million Americans who've collectively not died in vain, for their legacies live on as our country grows and learns and stumbles forward into its fourth century of existence.

I remember 1.2 million Americans who'd be proud to know that they rise within us as we stand by our country and its people, even after many of our services are complete.

I remember 1.2 million Iraqis who've died since the beginning of this occupation, whom I know the Iraqi people will never forget.

I remember that it's important to show patience with retailers like J.C. Penny on Memorial Day, who are offering free shipping for online orders of more than \$50, but only if consumers remember to use the Coupon Code "PATRIOT." Or auto-dealers draped in American Flags or in colonial garb with grins and promises of no money down, if you're just too hard up for cash this year.

I remember the righteousness of the struggle to make war a thing of the past, and stave off the hemorrhaging flow of

human life bled in armed conflict all over the world.

I recommit myself to the service of our nation, no longer in uniform, but in speaking the truth as I see it to its people so we may purge this nation and ourselves of lies, injustice and wrongdoing.

And I offer a universal prayer of peace and respect for our fallen. I will not forget your sacrifices by willfully allowing this nation to fall into decay. Rest in peace, brave ones, and know your legacies are safe and living within our ranks.

CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

A G.I. Bill That Can Actually
Get You an Education
pp4-6

Errors in the Casualty Count
p7

Remembering the Fallen
pp8-10

Comics by Kilgore
p14

EDITORIAL MISSION

The goal of this publication is to provide an outlet for 21st Century warriors to communicate their thoughts, opinions, feelings, and experiences in an uncensored environment.

Sit-Rep is published on a near-monthly basis. The contents of this newsletter are written by and for veterans of the Global War on Terror.

To submit content, provide feedback, request a subscription, or assist with distribution: contact editor@ivaw.org

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

© Copyright 2008

Proprietary rights to the contents of this periodical are held by their respective contributors.

General Disclaimer: The opinions presented in Sit-Rep are those of their own authors, and do not necessarily reflect the standpoint of Iraq Veterans Against the War or its parent organization, Veterans for Peace.

Editor

Sholom Keller
OEF & OIF Veteran

Associate Editors

Toby Hartbarger
OIF Veteran

TJ Buonomo
Former Military Intelligence Officer

Francesca Lo Basso
IVAW Media Coordinator

MAIL CALL A LETTER FROM IRAQ

Hello Everyone,

It's hot in Mosul right now. Today was 105 and summer hasn't even started yet.

Here is a picture I took on a recent trip around the city.

We have been working hard the past month, ensuring that the drivers of Mosul are properly prepared for the summer - and summer traffic.

We have built more checkpoints, in order to further restrict traffic slow and increase delays at existing bottlenecks, to the delight of the local residents. Everyone is so pleased with our progress; the insurgents have even taken to driving their suicide car bombs into the newly constructed checkpoints, as a token of their gratitude.

Alas, we cannot forget the tremendous progress the Iraqi Army has made in building and securing their own country. They have placed fifteen Jersey barriers throughout the town, even painted them with Iraqi Police logos, and right away rammed them with police vehicles for good measure!

Way to go, Iraqis! Way to go!

I will wrap this up for now; dreaming of cool weather, snow cones, snow, anything to take my mind away from the boiling heat of living in a shipping container with a broken air conditioner.

Be Easy Everybody!

John



They came today.

Two Sergeants left a few hours ago. SFC Andrew Beck is my "Casualty Assistance Officer". I asked Beck how did my son die. He said they found him at 06:30 am on April 9th with a gunshot wound to his head. I asked,

"Found him? Was he lost? Was he AWOL? Was he on Duty?" Beck said that he didn't have any more information until after the investigation. "Who shot him? I asked. Was it friendly or enemy fire? Beck looked down and said he did not know at this time. I informed Beck that I had spoken to his wife, and she told me that she had spoken to Jake a couple of hours prior to them finding him. She told me that he was in good spirits, and making plans for when he came home. I also informed Beck that Jake had a Myspace web site where he would write down his feelings and concerns, I also told Beck I understand psychology and that Jake would not kill himself without leaving a note to explain why. He told me not to listen to any other story until I got the full report from him in a few weeks. Jake's body would be in the United States by 10:30 tonight.

I asked the two sergeants, "We bombed Iraq back to the stone age...We have killed over 4,000 American soldiers...One million Iraqi civilians.... What for?...What did my son die for?" Both sergeants shook their heads in unison saying, "We don't know" as they shrugged. They had me sign some release forms before I escorted them out.

~Steven Douglas Elwood

I'll Carry That for You *by Robynn Murray.*

Dear friend don't worry
I'll carry that burden for you.
Place it on my shoulders
All I ask is this; Never forget me.

My friend I'm happy to carry your freedom.
Thank you for believing in me.
What's that? I'm a hero?
I never thought so.
Just doing my job.
I do it so you don't have to.

Friend, where have you been?
Busy? Oh, Sorry to bother you.
Where did your yellow ribbon go?
Okay I understand.
Yes I'm still carrying it for you.
It gets heavier every day.

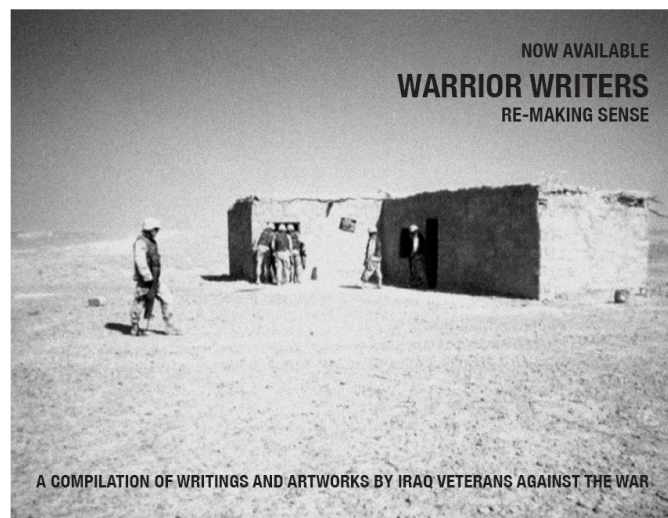
Friend! Friend! Where are you?
Oh there you are.
You're hard to find these days.
What's that? You have to go?
Wait!

Friend, I carried that burden as long as I could
Now I'm broken and hurting.
I could use some help.
You are nowhere to be found.

The Warrior Writers Project is a dynamic journey that provides tools and space for community building, healing and redefinition for our veterans. Through writing and artistic workshops that are based on their experiences in the military and Iraq, veterans unbury experiences and connect with each other on a personal level. The writing from the workshops is compiled into books, performances and exhibits that give the veterans strength in their voice and a sense of ownership over their stories. The second book by the Warrior Writers Project, *Re-Making Sense*, is a 200+ page collection of writing, photographs and art by members of Iraq Veterans Against the War. Copies are available on the IVAW website for \$20, members get a free copy. Copies of the first book

are also available for \$10; for more information, contact

warriorwriters@ivaw.org



Pentagon Opposes Veterans Benefits

Defense Department Officials Obstruct Efforts to Increase G.I. Bill Payouts for GWOT Veterans

by Logan Laituri

One would think the six-plus years of honorable service I gave to my country would merit at least a tit-for-tat response from our deep-pocketed Uncle Sam. After all, it would only require three days of the \$720 million per-day cost of the current conflict to finance the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act (VEAA, or the "21st Century GI Bill") being proposed by Senators Jim Webb (D-VA), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), and Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ). Considering the newly unveiled systemic corruption within the VA (maliciously concealing suicide rates, informing NY VA employees not to counsel OIF/OEF vets on their disability claims, etc.) and its toll on returning wounded warriors, one would think that American pundits and lawmakers would vigorously applaud any renovation in veterans' benefits; but they aren't.

Even Senator John McCain (R-AZ), who is quick to remind potential voters in the presidential race of his service record as a former POW, has been silent on this particular, issue to the point of obscenity; he has thus far refused to co-sponsor the bill (S. 22 in the Senate), and refused comment to reporters from various Military Times publications. His adversaries in the presidential election, Senators Barack Obama (D-IL) and Hillary Clinton (D-NY) however, have recognized the utmost importance of this legislation and have signed their support for the bill. Neither of them are veterans, yet both have the intestinal fortitude to support the troops and keep the

promises made to them at the recruiting center.

When the GI Bill of Rights was established under FDR's administration, it was one of the most significant pieces of legislation our country has ever known. It provided an education to returning WWII vets and essentially created our middle class (which is, by the way, diminishing once again). WWII and Korea veteran Senator John Warner (R-VA) recently lent his support as a lead co-sponsor, reminding the Senate of the supreme importance of the original GI Bill, from which he directly benefited. For a generation being lauded as "the next greatest generation," our own generation of veterans should be able to count on a similarly supportive government in self-improvement through education, as our heroic predecessors were able to; but we can't.

Veterans holding their breath waiting to hear from the Pentagon regarding this matter can expect to turn blue in the face. A recent Marine Corps Times article made it clear that defense officials "oppose GI Bill increases out of a concern that more generous benefits would hurt retention." Is it unfathomable to think that anyone re-enlists out of heritage or patriotism anymore? Perhaps officials are beginning to appreciate the ability of the average American to see the immense social and economic threat this war poses to the stability of our country. Besides, despite the obvious insecurity of Washington brass, **any** boost to the GI Bill is going

to be an enlistment multiplier. Even with its shortcomings, the current Montgomery GI Bill remains the single most powerful tool in the military's recruitment arsenal, and that's a no-brainer.

In response to the enormous support for S. 22, and the equivalent HR 2702 in the House introduced by Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA), the Department of Defense has thrown its support behind an ad-hoc bill proposed by Representatives John Boozman (R-AR) and Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD), HR 5684; astonishingly adding that the Representatives' proposed \$500 stipend (significantly less than S. 22's E-5 local BAH rate) should be further reduced to \$245, and any benefit increases only be offered to new recruits who sign up for four years or more. Sorry folks, you don't qualify if you're reading this and have served your country honorably during the Global War on Terror so far.

Not surprisingly, Senator McCain has recently band-wagoned a bill in the Senate that would favor career militarists and leave Reserve and National Guard (who constitute over 40% of the troops in combat) largely high and dry. Along with Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Richard Burr (R-NC), McCain has offered his take on the GI Bill crisis in the Enhancement of Recruitment, Retention, and Readjustment through Education Act (ERRREA), which is an insult to those who have suffered and sacrificed in its disproportionate

favor for the lifers; for example, the thousands of wounded warriors irreversibly disabled in combat and medically discharged would lose their opportunity for full educational benefits.

By now, if you've been holding your breath, you may be turning from an expectant blue to a furious red. For the millions who have served since 9/11, the VEAA is our best hope for seeing educational promises come to fruition. Not only is it long overdue, it is the least our elected representatives can do in return for the service we have offered, especially since we were all explicitly offered it at the recruiter's office and have paid for it with our own money. Furthermore, it is necessary to the survival of our generation of vets, who have been victim to a suicide epidemic of horrific proportions. Studies have shown that suicide rates

decrease significantly when the rate of education increases. For a demographic that is diseased with a record-high high attrition rate fueled by PTSD, an increase in opportunities for education could very well be our vaccine.

Beside the VEAA and the egregious ERRREA, there have been a small slew of bills introduced in both halls of Congress, but none as supportive and deserved as the 21st Century GI Bill. In a country that screams from its bumper stickers to "Support the Troops," it is unconscionable that any lawmaker NOT support this legislation. With twin support from within both the Senate Armed Forces and Veterans Administration committees (Chairmen Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Carl Levin (D-MI) both sponsor the bill in it's current form), it is inconceivable that our Commander in Chief (or any

candidate thereto) threatens to veto the bill, though he declares just that. Such a stance begs the question, exactly whom does our President support, if not the honorable service of (and promises to) those he commands, and the constituency to which he is servant? To what banner does he pledge allegiance, if not the same under which our courageous service members raise their right hand, reciting their oath of enlistment? Their promise to defend against threats to the Constitution are not being equally met with a fulfillment of the promises made upon their enlistments, and that's enough to make any American red in the face.

Logan Laituri served in the U.S. Army as an artillery forward observer and spent a year in Iraq with the 25th Infantry Division.



SGT Pat Neilson & SSG Ted Rakar, combat engineers with the National Guard and university students in Indiana, PA

Photos from the Weekend Warrior Project by Bill Thomas

For more information and to take action, visit gibill2008.com

The G.I. Bill 2008 campaign is a project of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America - iava.org

A Comparison of the Various Bills

Bill Name	S22 & HR5740 - Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act (VEAA).	HR5684 - Veterans Education Improvement Act (VEIA).	Enhancement of Recruitment, Retention, and Readjustment through Education Act (proposed April 23, 2008)
Pros	Covers full cost of tuition at a rate similar to the most expensive state college, monthly stipend equal to the E-5 married BAH rate in school's zip code, benefit scale adjusted to cumulative active duty (benefits deployed reserve, NG).	Enrollment is opt-in up to 90 days after discharge, monthly benefits not counted against other federal financial aid.	Transfer half total benefits to dependents if SM has 6+ yrs of service (full benefits if 12+ yrs), full benefits to military academy graduates, program for VA to match up to \$3,000 debt paid by participating schools.
Cons	White House threatens to veto if attached to war spending bill.	Reporting fee increased to \$21.	No perceivable enhancement for NG or Reservists. Unfairly advantages career servicemembers.
Cost	\$100/month for 12 months would be returned upon enrollment.	\$50/month for 24 months.	Same as MGIB.
Expiration	15 yrs. after discharge.	15 yrs. after discharge.	Same as MGIB.
Proposed monthly benefit (fulltime)	Equal to most expensive state school. Monthly stipend based on E-5 w/ dependent BAH. Per semester allowance for books.	\$1,450 \$500 monthly stipend.	\$1,500 (\$2,000 for 12+ yrs of service). \$500 yearly stipend.
Support	The American Legion, VFW, MOAA, IAVA, VVA, AFSA, EANGUS, AACC, NASULGC, Senate VA & Armed Forces Committee Chairman.	Representatives John Boozman and Stephanie Herseth Sandlin, Dept. of Defense.	Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and Richard Burr.

The Bright Side of Death

by Bryan Hannah

How the Military Is Hiding Casualties of War in Plain Sight

The death toll that most people are oblivious to, that 4,000+ number, has doubled in the last two and a half years, right? WRONG! Dead wrong. There are some details that disqualify soldiers from the military body count. For example, most people who sustain grave physical wounds, but die outside of Iraq, are not counted. Most people who are seriously wounded are often rushed out of the country in drug-induced comas to save their lives, but I think it's also damage control on the part of the military. Suicides, caused by post-traumatic stress disorder, are also excluded. The death toll would be much higher if suicides and extracountry were counted.

One of the soldiers in my battalion, 3/82 Field Artillery, died of 3rd degree burns over 100% of her body, as well as her lungs and mouth. Specialist Marisol Heredia was a water treatment specialist in our unit, because of a shortage of people with the correct skills, she was pumping fuel into a huge generator. This thing was about the size of a 12-passenger van. Being improperly trained, something went wrong and somehow the generator caught fire. She was heroically dragged from the flames by Sergeant Vaughn and rushed to the CSH (Combat Surgical Hospital) all the while screaming and repeating, "Kill me...Kill me..." In the IZ (International Zone), also known as Baghdad's infamous "Green Zone," she was provided emergency care and from there she was rushed to a hospital stateside in San Antonio,

Texas. The incident and our battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mike Tarsa, were investigated; the results were deemed inconclusive.

I was recently in our special projects shop for the First Cavalry Division and I noticed a poster board with the names of the fallen for OIF 2006-2008. Curious, I searched for her name and found it wasn't there. I asked SSG Dees if these were all the names, and he said yes. It was explained to me that the list was not up to date, so I plan on checking the OIF memorial since all the names from OIF 06-08 were recently added. If her name isn't on that, you can bet CNN will be getting a call and Fox News can be shamed for dismissing a good story.

It should be noted that she was a month shy of her 20th birthday when she was taken off of life support. Her epidermis was entirely gone and her body could not resist bacterial infection. She is survived by her sisters, fiance (Sergeant Travis Beaumont), and her mother. Sergeant Vaughn received no awards for courageously and selflessly pulling Heredia from the blazing flames at great personal risk.

What about the other casualties of war? The amputees, paraplegics, quadriplegics, people with brain damage and hearing loss, personalities that are permanently changed for the worse, marriages ruined (divorces among officers have risen 300% and enlisted people have a 200% higher divorce

rate than before 2003), and children who are messed up by separation from their parents. Is this war worth it? Is any possible success worth the cost? I mean, to the average person - I know it's worth it to Dick Cheney. If it was a sales transaction and some supreme being said, "Ok, you can have a few hundred billion dollars in exchange for about 200 daughters, wives, aunts, sisters, friends and mothers, 3,800 (give or take a few) sons, husbands, fathers, uncles, brothers, and friends; oh, and most of your allies, your bull market, and all of your credibility." Who would take that deal? In a room with 300,000,000 people in it I bet 100 would raise their hands. I bet they'd all get tarred and feathered too, so I don't get what's so different about stretching it out over 5 years. It's like a finance deal, with the Constitution as collateral.

Our rights to liberty and justice for all are muscles which should never be allowed to atrophy. Don't be trodden upon by the military industrial machine.

Before I go too far off the deep end, I leave you with this. War is hell.

Bryan is an active-duty enlisted soldier currently stationed at Ft. Hood, he maintains a blog at hoodgi.blogspot.com

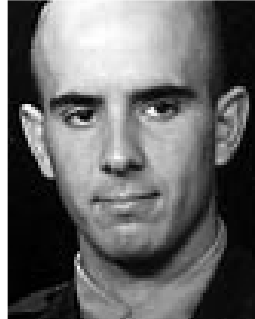
Ed. note: Since this article was written, SPC Heredia's name has been added to the OIF Memorial at Cooper Field. Many thanks to everyone who called, wrote, and helped to make that happen.

IN MEMORIAM

All gave some. Some gave all.



*Cpl Carlos Arellano
3/1 Marines, I Co
January 20th, 2006
Vehicle borne IED in
Haqlaniyah, Al Anbar*



*Sgt Jeremy Murray
3/1 Marines, Wpns Co
November 16, 2005
IED in Haditha*



*LCpl Larry Wells
1/4 Marines, C Co
August 6, 2004
Sniper in Najaf*



*Sgt Yadir Reynoso
1/4 Marines, Wpns Co
August 25, 2004
Firefight in Najaf*



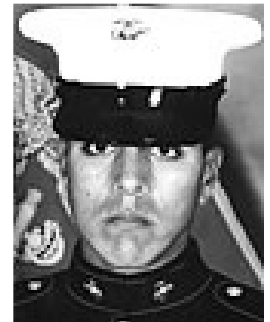
*Cpl James Jenkins
1/4 Marines, C Co
September 28, 2005
PTSD in Oceanside, CA*



*LCpl Alex Arredondo
1/4 Marines, A Co
August 25, 2004
Sniper in Najaf*



*PFC Juan Garza
1/4 Marines, Wpns Co
April 8, 2003
Sniper in Baghdad*



*Sgt Moses Rocha
1/4 Marines, B Co
August 5, 2004
Ambush-Firefight in
Najaf*

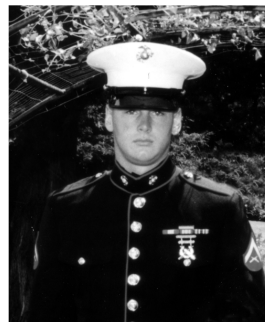
REMEMBERED BY: Jason Wayne Washburn



*SPC Maurice Johnson
C co, 501 SIG BN
November 1, 2003
IED in Mosul
REMEMBERED BY:
Sholom Keller*



*PFC Clayton Henson
2ACR
April 17, 2004
Small arms in Diwanayah
REMEMBERED BY:
Toby Hartbarger*



*Cpl Kevin M. Clarke
1/7 Marines, A Co
February 19, 2005
Small arms in Al Qaim*

*It was good to
know him.
He was like a
brother to me.*

REMEMBERED
BY: Sergio Kochergin



*LCpl Ruben Valdez Jr.
3/7 Marines
April 17, 2004
Gunfire in Husaybah*



*LCpl Michael Smith Jr.
3/7 Marines
April 17, 2004
Gunfire in Husaybah*



*CPL Christopher Gibson
3/7 Marines
April 17, 2004
Gunfire in Husaybah*



*LCpl Gary van Leuven
3/7 Marines
April 17, 2004
Gunfire in Husaybah*



*CPT Richard Gannon
3/7 Marines
April 17, 2004
Gunfire in Husaybah*



*Cpl Jacob Lugo
3/7 Marines
August 24, 2004
IED in Al Anbar*



*LCpl Christopher Wasser
3/7 Marines
April 8, 2004
IED in Al Anbar*

REMEMBERED
BY:

Jason Lemieux



*PFC Dennis Miller
2/72 Armor, 2ID
November 10, 2004
RPG in Ramadi*



*SFC Christopher Phelps
3/3 Cavalry, 1CD
June 23, 2004
IED in Baghdad*



*SSG Marlon Harper
1/8 Cavalry, 1CD
April 21, 2007
Small arms in Baghdad*



*CPL Jeremy Stacey
2/12 Cavalry, 1CD
July 5, 2007
IED in Baghdad*

"Come upon the four winds, oh breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

REMEMBERED BY: Clifton Hicks



*SPC David Roustum
1/108 Infantry
November 20, 2004
Grenade in Baghdad*

REMEMBERED BY:
Geoffrey Millard



*SPC Alexander Larkin
A Co, 741 MI BN, 704 MI BDE
July 22, 2007
Survived duty in Iraq, only to be
killed by the war at home*

REMEMBERED BY: SGT Coppa



*LCpl Shane Swanberg
3/7 Marines
September 15, 2005
Mortar attack in Ramadi
An easy-going guy who would walk around
the barracks with a Corona in hand*
REMEMBERED BY: Cameron White
and Matt Howard



*SPC Marisol Heredia
3/82 Field Artillery
September 7, 2007
3rd degree burns from
generator fire*
REMEMBERED BY:
Bryan Hannah

Survivor's Guilt

by Cloy Richards

I stare at this paper and don't know what to say
I don't feel right saying "happy memorial day"
I don't find anything happy in the price you've paid
We're both just pawns when this game called war gets played

My body came home but my spirit just stayed
That hot Iraqi day when you were slayed

Watching my back so I could sleep unafraid
I heard the explosion from where I laid
And instantly I watched the skies go gray
I watched my life just float away
How could things go this way?

You were my brother in arms and you took my place
But not like the way that car bomb took your face
And blew off your limbs

When I think about it my head starts to spin

I get nauseous when I think of your family
I want to tell them I truly am sorry
I'm sorry your son died protecting me
This isn't the way things were meant to be

You see that day your son took my duty
Your brother sacrificed four hours of sleep
So he could go guard a gate for me
Your fiancée took my fate from me
I'm sorry your father took my place for me
I'm sorry I can spend Memorial Day with my family
Today should have been a memorial for me
At least then the survivor could have lived guilt-free

This poem was Written on Memorial Day, 2006

CENTURION'S PURSE



Financial Assistance for:

- Resume/Professional training
- GI Bill Supplement
- Family Emergency
- Countering the Poverty Draft
- Legal Fees

Email centurion.purse@gmail.com
to apply for support today
(Centurion's Purse is also a Facebook Cause)

Centurion's Purse was created in response to the lack of proper care and support for veterans. Small to medium grants are available for current and former service members. This is not a loan, but a free gift to fellow GIs and vetrans in need. If someone you know would benefit from assistance, you may nominate them for a gift as well.

www.centurionspurse.org

Recommended Blogs

The Calm Before the Sand

calmbeforethesand.blogspot.com

Active Duty Army Specialist back from Iraq, who manages to keep blogging even though he's back to his wife and life outside the sandbox once more. "I served with honor, even as my countrymen back home left me to rot, and though I had lost all faith in the ability of war to secure peace."

Iraq: The Purgatorium - The Usual Suspect

theunlikelysoldier.blogspot.com

"You can't take my soul away from me". A mortarman in Iraq, scheduled to come home sometime between 'soon' and 'now', "G-ddamn this place. G-d damn these streets, the filth, the fucking stench, the eyes on you, the gear you hump everywhere, and the fashionable Oakleys that protect our eyes from whatever." Includes a soundtrack guaranteed to be just as loud and in-your-face as any grunt could want.

Irritated Vet

irritatedvet.blogspot.com

"Observations on the quagmire in Iraq, from an Iraq Vet's view." Heavy on the political insight, this intel analyst's skills haven't atrophied since he got out. If only the leadership were reading him, instead of the other way around.

Soldier, Interrupted

hoodgi.blogspot.com

Fort Hood active duty soldier and proud IVAW member, "You want to try to charge us with manufacturing dissent? Put the handcuffs on that NCO or Officer who treated us all like subhuman beings with serial numbers. Talk to the generals and colonels who bargain with our lives, like numbers to add blood medals to their chests. Talk to our president and his cronies who ignore our cries for reprieve."

Army Sergeant

activedutypatriot.blogspot.com

An active duty military intelligence NCO currently stationed overseas, and another proud IVAW member who believes in upholding full legality in both obligations. If you want to read the fine points of how military law accomodates IVAW, or information on military breakdown, hit her up here.

This Fucking War

thisfuckingwar.blogspot.com

MadTom engages in a labor of love, putting together a group of posts from military veterans. All hard hitting, all straight up.



GI Kate

myamericaniraqlife.blogspot.com

A female NCO veteran, with complicated feelings about Iraq, the Army, and the BS that surrounds it. Looking for other female veterans in New York.

Vet Voice

vetvoice.com

One-stop shopping for blogs about the war and veteran's issues. Brandon Friedman, Rock Richard, and LT Nixon frontpage from there. From Brandon, "My question: Why is it that nothing changes until someone goes to the media? All we ever hear in the military is, "Use your chain of command. Use your chain of command." Well, using the chain of command didn't stop the torture at Abu Ghraib. It didn't get us enough armor for our vehicles in Iraq. It didn't fix the disgraceful conditions at Walter Reed or the barracks at Fort Bragg. None of these situations were rectified until the media got involved."

Colby Buzzell: My War

cbftw.blogspot.com

An infantryman who got out. Unfortunately, the Army's seen fit to call him back. In his own words: "I really was looking forward to applying my GI Bill to photography classes so I could learn how to take pictures. But now, thanks to not enough Americans volunteering for military service, I now have to worry about my picture appearing on the second or third page of my hometown paper with the words, "it was his second deployment" in my obituary."

This is the U.S. Military - You Have No Rights!

A guide for barracks lawyers

by TJ Buonomo

Or do you? Yes, you volunteered. No, you weren't drafted. But volunteer or conscript, you have the right to speak your mind. Who gave you this right? In the Declaration of Independence, our Founders firmly and unapologetically proclaim, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

"Unalienable" is defined in Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law as "incapable of being alienated, surrendered, or transferred." By definition, rights cannot be given or taken away. This is the foundation upon which the First Amendment of the Constitution rests: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

There are of course limitations on what is considered "free speech" based upon legal precedents established in the courts but, contrary to what you might have been led to believe, there is no clause in the First Amendment which states, "except for Members of the Armed Forces." Does this mean you won't be harassed for exercising your rights? Not necessarily, as you might already

have noticed. Some commanders and NCOs are so used to thinking you don't have rights that when you start acting like you do they take it as an invitation to a smoke session. Others know better and simply don't care. In practice, the only rights you have are the ones you claim and exercise under law.

If you do choose to risk the wrath of your chain-of-command by speaking your mind, be smart about it. Read up on the regs first and contact a lawyer if you have questions. DoD Directives 1325.6, 7050.6, and 1344.10 further clarify your First Amendment rights as a Member of the Armed Forces, and are useful for staying out of trouble while engaging in your civic responsibilities. Also, review the relevant Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) articles, which can be found in the Manual for Courts Martial. Note that Article 90c(2)(a)(v) specifies that commanders do not have the authority to issue an order which violates your constitutional rights, and Article 138 gives you the right to seek a redress of grievances if you have been wronged by your commander.

Exercising your First Amendment rights is one of the most patriotic things you can do, whether your chain-of-command or the members of your unit share your views or not. It's also your duty as a responsible citizen. Democracy requires more than just a vote every two to four years to work. It requires critical thought and active participation. If you want to change anything you've got to educate yourself and make your voice heard.

The Pitfalls of Complacency

by Nick Morgan

As Americans, we are born with this predisposed notion to be "proud to be an American," or to "pursue the American Dream." Why then, with this ingrained hubris, have the American people allowed the very things that we have been told are unique about this country to be stripped away from us, one Amendment at a time? I see all of this proclivity across America, and I am amazed at how effectively certain individuals have established control over the masses under this increasingly large umbrella of public protection; public opinion has become a non-issue for the government.

What does it say about the efficiency of our current political structure when the politicians whom the American people have directly elected have failed to gain control of this unrestrained administration? When the many are controlled by the few, the interests of the several take a backseat to the interests of the elite. Why then, must our brothers and sisters continue to be subjected to an occupation based on fabricated intelligence and deceptive persuasion of public opinion? General Petraeus told Congress that we are in Iraq protecting national interests, but failed to elaborate on what exactly those interests are. I find it increasingly difficult to believe that the American people don't see how this failed foreign policy has destroyed the lives of millions, while only benefiting corporate profiteers. Why have so many people pretended to support our troops, when they have done next to nothing to give our troops the support they need once they arrive home?

It may seem like I am asking a lot of questions. I am doing so to provoke thought. Look around you at our failing economy, struggling military, poor quality education, the food crisis, increasing national debt, and our vast unemployment. Look around and tell me that it isn't time for our Constitution to be reinstated, and for the control of this country to return to its people. Now is the time to embrace the dissent on which this country was founded.

Reports From the Field

Great Lakes & Plains

April 18-20: Fourteen members organized and attended a Winter Soldier event at the Iowa State Campus Antiwar Network conference in Iowa City. IVAW members contributed to the opening plenary, "*Why We Say Troops Out Now*," and organized a local Winter Soldier event "*Putting the War on Trial*."

Mountain

May 16-18: Members from the Mountain Region joined by representatives from Minnesota chapter and the national office in Philadelphia held a strategy and planning retreat for the Democratic and Republican National Conventions.

Mid-Atlantic

Washington, D.C.

April 24th: Tom Morello of The Nightwatchman held a benefit concert for IVAW. The following day, he and IVAW members from the Midatlantic region visited wounded GIs at Walter Reed.

May 14th: Four Members testified before the Congressional No Fear Tribunal, sponsored by the No Fear Institute, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and Senator Charles Grassley. The goal of the hearings was to gather information about discrimination and reprisal against whistleblowers. IVAW members shared their personal stories and advocated for legislation that would prevent and/or hold accountable military commands that punish members of the military for speaking out within their rights.

Adam Kokesh discussed the downgrading of discharges and harassment of members of the Marine Corps IRR (Individual Ready Reserve) who have spoken out, including his story, and those of Cloy Richards and Liam Madden. Geoff Millard testified

on threats and harassment he received as a member of the New York National Guard. Mark Wilkerson discussed the harassment he received while attempting to get his CO (Conscientious Objector) status approved. T.J. Buonomo testified on being involuntarily discharged from the Army after sending letters to his Congressional representatives. These four IVAW members were joined by attorney Mike Lebowitz, a reserve JAG officer and Iraq veteran who specializes in military free speech issues.

May 15: Nine Winter Soldier panelists testified under oath before the Congressional Progressive Caucus about rules of engagement, the killing and abuse of civilians, the use of drop weapons, and the true consequences of the "surge".

Southeast

North Florida chapter

On April 8th the North Florida chapter of IVAW along with Veterans for Peace, Florida State University students for campus progress, and other FSU student groups hosted a Winter Soldier panel in Gainesville FL. Students, veterans, and concerned citizens trickled in until the crowd reached near 200 people. The panel included six veterans of the Iraq war, four members of the IVAW and two unaffiliated veterans. The panel of vets spoke on destruction of Iraq, violation of human rights, hardship on soldiers faced with multiple tours, and a broken VA system, as well as other important

topics. Vets told their stories to a captivated and shocked audience and then opened the floor for questions. The panel lasted nearly four hours with all of the audience participation and was a huge success leading to new IVAW memberships. After the conclusion of the panel FSU students and other audience members gathered around to thank the veterans for coming and sharing their personal truths. The feeling in the air was that of empowerment for both the panel and the audience. One audience member asked, "Where do you see the future of the movement, and what can individuals do"? The answer from the panel was unanimous, do anything you can, individuals take action don't wait for others to plan events that you can show up to, move yourselves! This was one of many local winter soldier events taking place around the country. IVAW members are taking what they experienced in Silver Springs and carrying it with them back to their homes where they are working to spread the truth, and to unify Americans to resist this illegal and immoral occupation.

Our America

by Mary Ann Schallert

Believe in your soul, in your heart and your mind
Our country must be that great shining land
Where we live every minute in justice and peace
We believed this as children before we grew up
We know the potential for greatness and good
We are the people who can find a way
To all work together, to make the dream real
On the horizon our America's still there
Waiting for us, just a bit out of reach
To my brothers and sisters out there in the world
Let's all make a difference, for everyone's sake

Mary Ann Schallert recently retired after over 20 years in the U.S. Navy

SCENES FROM THE WAR

THE U.S. ARMY RAISED ITS ENLISTMENT AGE TO 42.



THE MARINE CORPS IS RECALLING HUNDREDS OF INACTIVE RESERVISTS.



MILITARY RECRUITERS CONTINUE TO FUCK RECRUITS (HEY, IT'S NOTHING NEW).



AND CANADA STILL REMAINS THE BEST PLACE FOR DESERTION.



KILGORE © 2006

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
(877)-447-4487**

Overseas number:
415-487-2635

<http://girightshotline.org>
girights@girightshotline.org

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

UPCOMING IVAW EVENTS

New England

Hiking, canoeing, and camping trip in Southern Vermont
Weekend of June 21st
Contact newengland@ivaw.org

Philly Chapter

Reading of the Declaration of Independence across the street from where it was written
July 4th, 1200 hrs
Contact philly@ivaw.org

Asheville Chapter

Veterans' Voices - a show by and about veterans, servicemembers and their families
Wednesdays at 1700 hrs
WPVM 103.5 FM
Contact vetsvoices@yahoo.com

Madison Chapter

"Memorial Mile" tombstone display
May 25th - 31st
Olbrich Park
Memorial Day Ceremony
May 26th at 1300 hrs
James Madison Park
Contact madison@ivaw.org

Northwest

Regional Winter Soldier Panel
May 31st, 1200 hrs
Seattle Town Hall
Contact seattle@ivaw.org

Chicago Chapter

Veterans Helping Veterans
Call-in show on *Channel 21 CAN-TV*
Thursdays at 1800hrs
Contact chicago@ivaw.org

Camp Lejeune

Memorial Day Tattoo Convention
May 23rd - 26th
Alien Art Tattoo Parlor
2005 Lejeune Blvd., Jacksonville

Vicenza, Italy

September, 2008
Welcome Home show for the 173rd
Airborne BCT
Contact europe@ivaw.org

Boston Chapter

Memorial Day BBQ and care package party
May 25th, 1500 hrs
Contact boston@ivaw.org

War is a racket.
A few profit and
the many pay.
-USMC Maj. Gen.
Smedley Butler

It is only those who
have never heard a
shot, never heard the
shriek and groans of
the wounded and
lacerated... that cry
aloud for more blood,
more vengeance, more
desolation.
-Gen. William T. Sherman