

Are Veterans taken for granted?



Rockland Coalition
for Peace & Justice

Casualties of war (3/19/03 - 11/14/03), and still counting ...

- **U.S. soldiers** : 401 (died), **over 2318** (wounded), **over 7500** (medical evacuated)
- **Iraqis** : **over 13,000** (died)
- **U.S. Cost** : **67 Billion** (~\$670 per household) up to now
- **43.6 Million** Americans (15.2% of the population) lack health benefits
- **38 Million** Americans (12.4% of the population) live below poverty level

7,500 US Casualties Evacuated from Iraq War Zone to US

by Esther Schrader, *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 2003

Since April, when the first casualties began arriving, **more than 1,875** have been treated at Walter Reed, an average of about 10 a day, 300 a month. On any given day during that time, the hospital has had about 50 inpatients and another 180 outpatients from the war....A half hour away, at Andrews Air Force Base, the tennis court and gymnasium of the fitness center have become a medical staging facility for those evacuated from the war zone.

More than 7,500 have come through since April.

In addition to the **nearly 1,900** who have gone on to Walter Reed, **another 1,500** have been sent to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., which treats the injured from the Navy and Marines. **Several thousand** less seriously wounded soldiers have been sent directly to some of the military's dozens of smaller hospitals and clinics around the country.

Reserve and National Guard soldiers recuperating from wounds or illnesses contracted in Iraq were housed in barracks without air conditioning or private bathrooms and often forced to **endure long waits for surgery and other treatment**, said Brig. Gen. Richard L. Ursone, assistant Army surgeon general for force protection.

Support the Troops

by Paul Krugman, *The New York Times*, November 11, 2003

One of George W. Bush's major campaign themes in 2000 was his promise to improve the lives of America's soldiers — and military votes were crucial to his success. But these days some of the harshest criticisms of the Bush administration come from publications aimed at a military audience.

For example, last week the magazine **Army Times** ran a story with the headline "**An Act of `Betrayal,'**" and the subtitle "In the midst of war, key family benefits face cuts." The article went on to assert that there has been "a string of actions **by the Bush administration to cut or hold down growth in pay and benefits**, including basic pay, combat pay, health-care benefits and the death gratuity paid to survivors of troops who die on active duty."

Vets push for own party

by Nancy Cacioppo, *The Journal News*, November 11, 2003

Vietnam veterans Jeremy Honey and David C. Smith want to ensure that the voices of veterans from every conflict and branch of the military are heard. They said their **increasing frustration with cutbacks in benefits and programs** has led them to join a grass-roots effort in several states to **form a Veterans Party of America**. And they are hoping that government leaders will take notice.

"When we were called upon — whatever our ethnicity or religion — we served," Smith said. "But we've seen **support for veterans deteriorate over the years**, including a lack of services for homeless, unemployed or challenged veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse or outright neglect." The cutbacks are coming as aging veterans need more services, and the United States has active service members who will require support when they return.

Smith noted that while the \$79 billion initial allocation for the war in Iraq, now augmented by \$87 billion for the postwar effort, was passed by Congress, **"they can't come up with \$3 (million) or \$4 million to keep the VA hospitals open in this area."** "Hearing the reservists and National Guard say they will not re-enlist tells you that we're mortgaging our future," he added.

'No President has Lied so Baldly and so Often and so Demonstrably'

by Andrew Gumbel, *The Independent /UK*, November 9, 2003

"The intelligence process is a bit like virginity," says Ray McGovern, who worked as a **CIA analyst for 27 years**. "Once you prostitute it, it's never the same. Your credibility never recovers. Mr McGovern worked near the very top of his profession, giving direct advice to Henry Kissinger during the Nixon era and preparing the President's daily security brief for Ronald Reagan. Now he is **co-founder** of a group of former CIA employees called **Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity**, or Vips for short.

What the Bush White House has done, he believes, is far worse than the false premise that dragged the United States into the Vietnam War -... "The Gulf of Tonkin was a spur-of-the-moment thing, and Lyndon Johnson seized on that. That's very different from the very **calculated, 18-month, orchestrated, incredibly cynical campaign of lies that we've seen to justify a war**. This is an order of magnitude different. It's so blatant."

"Now we know that **no other President of the United States has ever lied so baldly and so often and so demonstrably** ... The presumption now has to be that he's lying any time that he's saying anything."

Veterans Battle on the Home Front

by Maile Melkonian, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, November 11, 2003

A system that once provided health care for those who served their country is now renegeing on that promise. **The president has refused a congressional request for \$275 million** in emergency funds to cover the Veterans Administration health-care shortfall last year. Remember, that was the year Bush got an extra \$50 billion for his so-called war on terrorism.

Now he wants to **slash \$2 billion more** from the VA's strained budget for 2004, and continue the assault on benefits over the next decade. House Republicans voted to **take a whopping \$28 billion from vets** over 10 years -- on the same March day they passed a resolution supporting our troops in Iraq. As you read this, more than 200,000 veterans have been **waiting six months or more** (two years for some!) for their first VA appointment.

More Iraqis Supporting Resistance, CIA Report Says

by Jonathan S. Landay, *The Knight Ridder Newspapers*, November 12, 2003

A new, top-secret CIA report from Iraq warns that growing numbers of Iraqis are concluding that **the U.S.-led coalition can be defeated** and are **supporting the resistance**. The report's bleak tone and Bremer's private endorsement differ sharply with the upbeat public assessments that President Bush, his chief aides and Bremer are giving as part of an aggressive publicity campaign aimed at countering rising anxieties at home over increasing U.S. casualties in Iraq. It also raised concerns about the governing council. The group, which is dominated by **former Iraqi exiles with little popular support**, has failed to persuade ordinary Iraqis that the occupation is temporary and will lead to a unified, sovereign Iraq, the report said.

Bringing an End to the Iraq Conflict

by James O. Goldsborough, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, November 10, 2003

The name "Vietnam" is heard today because of growing evidence that America's occupation of Iraq is unwelcome, both to Americans and Iraqis. The longer it lasts the more unwelcome it will become, which is why an exit strategy is vitally needed....**In unnecessary wars, bad wars, wars of aggression, retreat can be the best course.**

Among analysts, no one has done better work on Iraq than Toby Dodge, English author of the just-published "Inventing Iraq," which recounts the British occupation of Iraq in 1920-32 and ties it to present events. "The United States in Iraq today," Dodge writes, "must understand that it is both living with the consequences of (Britain's) failure and in danger of repeating it."

Just as Iraqis, Dodge says, defeated the British through "violence and political mobilization," they are prepared to **bleed Americans to death today**. There are forces at work that care little about Bush's rhetorical machismo. **We must learn from history.**

Join **Rockland Coalition for Peace and Justice** for weekly peace vigils
at Middletown Rd. & Rt. 59 in Nanuet, **every Saturday** 1-3 pm. For info:
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