

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS ENSURING RIGHTS, RECOGNITION AND REMEMBRANCE

# VFW

## IED HUNTING IN Afghanistan

**MARCH 2011**

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present and past p. 14**

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in special courts p. 36**

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• *By Richard K. Kolb*



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**COVER:** 1st Lt. Phil Kirk of the 203rd Engineer Battalion's Forward Support Company inspects the ground in front of a Buffalo with a roller attached in Paktika province, Afghanistan, in April 2010.

*Photo by Sgt. Jon Dougherty.*



# VFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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## VFW VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

### Women Vets Make Valuable Contributions

*Female military personnel have had an especially prominent presence in recent years, and they are growing among the ranks of vets, too.*

In the last decade, women in the armed forces have become increasingly visible to the public at large. Currently, they make up 14% of active-duty personnel. Their roles in Afghanistan and Iraq—245,000 have served in the war zones—have placed them at center stage. And they constitute 2.5% of American deaths in those theaters.



**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF**  
Richard L. Eubank

Naturally, women now are a larger share of all veterans, numbering 1.8 million, or 8% of the total. Not surprisingly, females are 6% of veterans who use VA health care services. Some 125,000 women vets of Afghanistan and Iraq have used VA care. In fact, 78% doing so are younger than 40. Female VA enrollees jumped 20% in 2009 alone.

To accommodate their needs, VA's 2011 budget earmarks nearly \$220 million for gender-specific care targeting females. VFW has long been a proponent of VA measures designed to address their special circumstances. *VFW Resolution 608*—"High Quality VA Services for Women Veterans"—outlines such steps in that direction.

Among VFW priority goals, embodied in this resolution, are these: improving VA outreach to women, providing training for their specific care (physical, psychological and emotional) and hiring VA specialized health care providers for women vets. Fortunately, VA is successfully striving to meet these objectives.

Meanwhile, VFW is conducting its own outreach efforts. A special campaign called *She Serves* was launched in November 2008 and fully commenced a year later. *She Serves* is essentially a social network for familiarizing female vets with VFW activities. A Membership

Department initiative, the goal is to make women vets feel welcome and wanted.

A core group of VFW female vets was created to offer advice. Tips they provided has allowed the website ([www.JoinSheServes.org](http://www.JoinSheServes.org)) to enhance camaraderie and maintain connections among younger female vets. We feel this sort of outreach works especially well with

this most recent generation of vets because they are so tech savvy.

But VFW efforts are not limited to the website. The organization has long sponsored forums as discussion groups focusing on women-specific issues. Recognition of their service and sacrifices is extremely important as well. In 2009, we published *Women at War: From the Revolutionary War to the Present*. This special 56-page booklet is available from the Membership Department and free at [www.vfw.org/womenatwar](http://www.vfw.org/womenatwar).

Integrating women into the entire infrastructure of the organization is the long-term goal. Besides the National Women's Veterans Committee, each state or Department has its own committee geared toward recruiting females. Women must move beyond simply being members to becoming actively engaged in leadership positions.

Holding office at the Post, District, Department and national levels will place women in positions of prominence. Currently, one woman is a state (New Mexico) commander. Others have served in national appointments. As time moves on, the number of female VFW leaders will increase. It is all of our jobs to help facilitate this progress.

*Richard Eubank*

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To ensure the national security through maximum military strength.

To speed the rehabilitation of the nation's disabled and needy veterans.

To assist the widows and orphans and the dependents of disabled and needy veterans.

To promote Americanism through education in patriotism and constructive service to the communities in which we live.

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## Remembering the 20th of the PG War

Thanks for the special issue on the Persian Gulf War (January 2011). It is hard to believe that it's been 20 years already. As a *Desert Storm* participant, I often feel dismissed as a 100-hour war veteran.

*Sharon R. Snead, Silver Spring, Md.*

Re: 20th anniversary issue on the 1991 *Operation Desert Storm* ("Gulf War Illness: A Practical Guide"). VFW should be commended for its advocacy before congressional committee hearings over the years. The organization vigorously pushed for service-connection by VA and consequent benefits for such ailments as Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS).

*Fred Campbell, San Angelo, Texas*

### Persian Gulf Vets in Congress

Among the six new Persian Gulf War vets elected to Congress in November was Michael Grimm, who represents the 13th Congressional District (Staten Island) of New York. A decorated Marine veteran, he is an active and valued member of VFW Post 5090.

*Ted Cohen, New York*

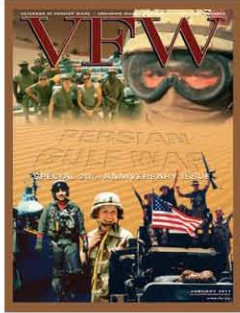
### Repaying a Debt

"Vets Proud of Kuwait Liberation (*Issues Up Front*, January): Here was my proposal to the government of Kuwait. Children of the 374 Americans killed liberating your country should be given the same opportunities that all Kuwaitis have: a free college education. To prove that it was "immeasurably grateful," Kuwait should have paid for their college. After all, it was America that gave them back their country.

*Lavern MacLaird, San Diego, Calif.*

### Forgotten Contributions

Thank you for the special January issue. It was well done and very appropriate. But please don't forget that Patriot missile crews played a very active role in taking out Iraqi Scud missiles. This



probably resulted in Israel not entering the war.

*Donald F. Pettigrew, Sr.,  
Huntsville, Ala.*

Navy Seabees—Naval Mobile Construction Battalions 24 (Reserve) and 40 (active duty)—were based at Al Jubyal, Saudi Arabia. They completed a variety of projects, including preparing for casualties, stabilizing areas for aircraft, maintaining supply roads, constructing receiving camps and tending to the fleet hospital in Saudi.

*William Dempsey, E-Mail*

Bravo Zulu to whomever wrote the Navy/Coast Guard section of "For Unit Valor in Battle" (January) for correctly describing the *USS Tripoli*. Now keel-haul that spineless wimp for the politically correct reference to the ship as "it" instead of "her." All true sailors know ships are referred to in the feminine.

*Elliott Stoffregen, Millbrook, Ala.*

### Heroism Displayed

Enjoyed "For 'Extreme Gallantry'" (January). I just wanted to let you know that Capt. Eddie Ray was guarding Gen. Thomas V. Draude.

*Pat Harte, E-Mail*

Air Force Cross recipient Capt. Paul T. Johnson flew for the 353rd TFS, attached to the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing. His historic A-10A is housed in the National Museum of the Air Force at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.

*Master Sgt. Ladd A. Riser,  
Ohio Air National Guard*

Navy Lt. Lawrence Slade, shot down and captured in Iraq, was ultimately

released in March 1991, but only after being severely tortured and disabled.

*Olaf Grosland, E-Mail*

Bill Shughart is helping Lt. Col. William Andrews in the picture on page 25. Bill's cousin was Randy Shughart, who was killed in Somalia in 1993 and awarded the Medal of Honor.

*Peggy J. Headrick, E-Mail*

### Unit Valor on the Battlefield

I absolutely loved "For Unit Valor in Battle" (January). I was honored to see my unit, the 229th Advanced Attack Helicopter Regiment, mentioned in the article. I never realized that the VUA is the unit equivalent of the Silver Star. As a scout pilot with the 4th Battalion ("Flying Tigers"), I am proud of our performance and will be sharing this piece with my "Flying Tiger" brothers.

*Brendan Dlouhy, E-Mail*

This is just a note to let you know that only the 1st Battalion ("The Vipers") of the 24th Aviation Regiment received the VUA. I was the battalion commander.

*Tom Stewart, E-Mail*

My unit ("Iron Tigers") was omitted from the VUA list. The 2nd Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment, 1st Armored Division, received the VUA for its part in the liberation of Kuwait. This included the destruction of an entire brigade of the Iraqi Medina Division, victory at Al Busayyah and helping to destroy a brigade of the Adnan Division at Ar Rumaylah Airport.

*Enrique E. Durazo, E-Mail*

Task Force 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, and attached units, also was awarded the VUA. Its breaching operation cleared 13 miles of enemy positions, contributing to the collapse and destruction of the Iraqi 48th Infantry Division.

*Ward A. Philips, E-Mail*

Brief news items of interest to veterans and their families.

## SportClips Donates \$400,000 to VFW

SportClips, a hair-cutting franchise with 740 locations nationwide, generously donated \$400,000 to VFW's *Operation Uplink* in December. The gift will fund the "Free Call Day" program throughout 2011. Troops deployed overseas and hospitalized veterans are eligible for *Uplink*.

This is the single largest corporate contribution to the program to date.

Company team members and clients solicit and donate the monies.

SportClips CEO Gordon Logan, a VFW life member, said, "We remain strong in our commitment to the men and women who are serving our country, as well as their family and friends.

"We appreciate all those who worked to make this landmark donation possible. The memory of wanting to call home during my days overseas is one that stays with me."

SportClips began supporting *Operation Uplink* in 2007. Since then, it has donated a total of \$850,000 to the program.



SportClips CEO Gordon Logan, store managers Kathleen Hartnett and Tina Kucinsky, and VFW Commander-in-Chief Richard Eubank display the check for *Uplink*.

## Four GIs Nominated for MOH

The 2011 defense authorization bill includes Medal of Honor nominations for four soldiers spanning the Civil War to Vietnam. They are 1st Lt. Alonzo Cushing (of Gettysburg fame) and Pvt. John Sipe, both Civil War veterans. Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Kapaun, a POW in Korea, and Spec. 4 Robert Towles from Vietnam round out the four.

Though such submissions are fairly common, observers of the process point out that the services rarely examine the cases and actually award the medal.

## 'General of the Armies'

In a *Wall Street Journal* article (Jan. 13, 2011) advocating a fifth star for Gen. David Petraeus, Pete Hegseth and Wade Zirkle of Vets for Freedom listed those who have held such prestigious ranks. Because this question has been asked in the past, here are their names:

**General of the Armies of the United States:** George Washington, John Pershing.

**General of the Army:** Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, George Marshall, Omar Bradley, Henry Arnold.

**Fleet Admirals:** Chester Nimitz, William Halsey, Ernest King, William Leahy.

## Memorial Cross Controversy

In early January, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the 43-foot cross on Mount Soledad in San Diego is unconstitutional because it supposedly violates the First Amendment's "establishment clause."

Meanwhile, the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial, also in California, remains at the center of controversy. The Liberty Institute, representing VFW's Department of California and VFW Post 385 in Barstow, filed a lawsuit against the Obama Administration for refusing transfer of the land upon which the memorial stands. A 2003 act of Congress directed such a transfer.

The Administration also refuses to allow VFW to rebuild the memorial after vandals destroyed it on May 9, 2010. The WWI memorial dates back 76 years.

The Liberty Institute, based in Plano, Texas, specializes in upholding constitutional and First Amendment religious and free speech rights.

## mailcall

↳ Continued from page 6

**Editor's Note:** The 1st Battalion, 37th Armor, 1st Armored Division, also received the VUA. In one engagement, it destroyed 26 T-72 Iraqi tanks and 47 APCs.

The Tiger Brigade of the 2nd Armored Division operated with the 2nd Marine Division during the war. So it also was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation. I don't know how rare it is for an Army unit to be under operational command of the Marines and for it to receive a Navy award.

*Joseph DeCaro, Stratford, Conn.*

## Completing the Chronology

Re: "A GI's Combat Chronology, 1991." All 379th Bomb Wing (Heavy) flights from Michigan on Jan. 17-18, 1991, landed and operated out of Saudi Arabia after their sorties were complete. I was on one of the 12 aircraft in the initial 379th attack on the 17th of January.

*Jim Hodgson, E-Mail*

I was a medic with 2nd Plt., D Co., 1st Bn., 41st Inf. Regt., 2nd Armored Division (AD), which was attached to the 1st Infantry Division. My platoon was hit by the 1-34 Armor. The story of my platoon getting hit is an odyssey that is practically unbelievable. Overall, the 2nd AD (Forward) had eight killed and one civilian killed and about 50 WIA. 1-41 Infantry lost seven men and roughly 40 wounded (some untreated). All losses were caused by fratricide.

*Jeffrey "Doc" Hoffman, E-Mail*

The Army National Guard also played a part in the Gulf War. For instance, the 1168th Transportation Company (Iowa ANG) moved 10,000 enemy POWs.

*Dennis Holland, E-Mail*

**Editor's Note:** During the Persian Gulf War, 37,484 National Guard members in 297 units deployed to the Gulf region. Eighteen guardsmen died in the area from non-hostile causes.

Two combat units—142nd (Arkansas) and 192nd (Tennessee) Field Artillery brigades served there. Six of their battalions supported the advance into Iraq. One, 1st Bn., 158th FA (Oklahoma), fired rockets the Iraqis called "steel rain."

## 'Not Little Men': VA Focuses on Women Veterans

As the number of women veterans rises, VA must adapt. One proposed change is posting a Women Veterans Bill of Rights in all VA facilities. **By Kelly Von Lunen**

In recent years, the disparity between VA health care for men and women appears to be shrinking—a trend that VFW supports through a resolution and its Priority Goals.

That women are now a significant percentage of service members and veterans is widely known. In addition, 6% of veterans who currently use VA health care are women. The number has doubled since 2004, and VA expects it to do so again by 2020.

The average age of female veterans is 48, compared to 61 for male veterans. About 78% of women veterans seeking VA health care today are younger than 40, and 66% of female Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans enrolled in VA health care are under 30.

However, as of Jan. 12, only one piece of pending legislation zeroes in on women vets.

### Right to be Treated With Respect

A proposed bill—*H.R. 5953*—would require a *Women Veterans Bill of Rights* to be prominently displayed in each VA facility and distributed to veterans. Among the 24 rights is the right to:

- Coordinated, comprehensive, primary women's health care at every VA medical facility.
- Be treated with dignity and respect at all VA facilities.
- Request and get treatment by clinicians with specific training and experience in women's health issues.
- Be featured proportionately, including by age and ethnicity, in VA outreach materials, including electronic and print media.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Bob Filner (D-Calif.), does not change women veterans' rights, but rather makes them visible in VA facilities. An amendment to the bill also requires that signs specify no change has been made to federal laws prohibiting VA from providing abortion services.

The House of Representatives passed *H.R. 5953* by voice vote on Nov. 30, 2010. However, the 111th Congress did not act upon the bill.

### 'We Are Not Little Men'

At a July 28, 2010, Forum for Women Veterans at Arlington National Cemetery, VA officials outlined initiatives to improve women vets' health care, mental health care, PTSD treatment, readjustment services, prosthetics, and benefits awareness, and reduce homelessness.

VA earmarked nearly \$220 million in its 2011 budget for gender-specific care of female veterans, up some 10% from 2010. Among other things, the money will help fund a 24/7 call center and social networking site for female war zone vets.

Of the nearly 2 million women who have served in the U.S. military, more than 245,000 have deployed to Iraq and

Afghanistan. Women make up 14% of active-duty troops, and 17.6% of the National Guard and reservists. VA estimates that women veterans will constitute 16% of all vets by 2020—twice today's number.

The number of women working at VA also is up. Dr. Antonette Zeiss, VA deputy chief of Mental Health Services, says that 55% of VA psychologists, 72% of VA social workers and 41% of VA psychiatrists are women.

VA's Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group has produced 19 health awareness posters specifically for women veterans.

"The significance of branding ... can't be overlooked," said Patty Hayes, chief consultant for the group. "It is important that when a woman walks into a VA facility, she sees images of women veterans like herself."

VA announced in January that it is evaluating emergency room (ER) care for women, rolling out an education plan for ER providers, implementing a breast cancer registry to assist in follow-up of abnormal mammograms, and training 400 more providers in women's health.

The focus on women's health is important because some medical issues do not present the same in women as in men. For example, women react differently to some medications, develop diseases at different rates, and exhibit different symptoms to various conditions. Even prosthetics are customized for women.

"If you lost your leg, we have a prosthesis that allows you to wear stiletto heels," Nataria Garovoy, director of the Women's Prevention, Outreach & Education Center in Menlo Park, Calif., told *The Washington Post*. "We are not little men." [Garovoy was pictured on the cover of *VFW* magazine in March 2009.]

E-mail [kvonlunen@vfw.org](mailto:kvonlunen@vfw.org)



## VFW Supports Women Veterans

VFW's 2011 Priority Goals include three women's health initiatives:

- Hire specialized health care providers for women veterans.
- Provide training for gender-specific care, mental health care, PTSD and military sexual trauma.
- Improve VA outreach so that all veterans—especially female, minority and rural veterans—are aware of the range of health care services and benefits available to them.

VFW Res. 608 incorporates these initiatives.

SERVICE

## VA Report Card Highlights Women

VA health care “scores better than private-sector health plans,” according to a self-issued “report card” VA released in January. The third annual *VA Facility Quality and Safety Report* rated the quality of care at each of VA’s 153 facilities across the nation.

VA PHOTO



The Women Veterans Health Center at the Palo Alto VA Health Care System provides preventive health screenings as part of its regular care for women vets.

The report also notes that VA “shares the same challenges as the private sector in providing equal care to all patients.” Specifically for women veterans, VA says it is:

- Evaluating emergency room care.
- Rolling out an education plan for ER providers.
- Implementing a breast cancer registry to assist in follow-up of abnormal mammograms.
- Training 400 more providers in basic and advanced “mini-residencies” in women’s health.

The full 205-page report can be viewed online at <http://www1.va.gov/health/docs/HospitalReportCard2010.pdf>.

## TBI Could Cause Epilepsy

Doctors at the 64th American Epilepsy Society Annual Meeting in December said veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI) could develop epilepsy. Though the risk is still unknown, attendees said they hope to educate civilian and military doctors about a possible connection.

Some 200,000 U.S. troops have suffered TBI while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Karen Parko from the San Francisco VA Medical Center said at the meeting that VA has treated more than 80,000 vets with epilepsy and the number is expected to increase dramatically.

Veterans interested in more information about TBI and epilepsy can access the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center website at [www.dvbic.org](http://www.dvbic.org).

## Volunteers Wanted for TBI Study

A coalition of doctors is seeking volunteers to study the effectiveness of hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) to treat traumatic brain injury. The National Brain Injury Rescue and Rehabilitation Clinical Trial needs 1,000 volunteers with mild cases of TBI to participate in studies at 80 locations nationwide.

HBOT is the use of oxygen in a pressure chamber at greater than atmospheric pressures as a medication to treat injury and disease. According to NBIRR, the trials will consist of volunteers breathing 100% oxygen at 1.5 atmospheres for 60 minutes in 40-80 separate treatments.

The study will begin this May and could last until April 2014. The doctors are especially interested in including war veterans between the ages of 18-65. Active-duty troops can participate as well.

For more information, access [www.nbirr.org](http://www.nbirr.org).



## Group Offers Dignified Burials

A California non-profit group is seeking volunteers to help provide military funerals for “forgotten” veterans. The *Missing in America Project* says its mission is to “locate, identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains” of American veterans.

“Our government promised every veteran a decent burial,” said National Director Fred Salanti of Redding, Calif. “That doesn’t include sitting on a shelf in some funeral home basement.”

Salanti, a retired Army major, told the *Boston Globe* in January that some 2-3 million remains—mostly cremated ashes—are in morgues or on funeral home shelves. His group buried 20 such veterans remains with full military honors at Calverton National Cemetery on eastern Long Island, N.Y., in early January.

The *Missing in America Project*—sanctioned by VA—includes some 800 volunteers. For more information, access [www.miap.us](http://www.miap.us).

## Newsletter Serves Newer Vets

A VA newsletter offers resources for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans interested in learning more about benefits, health risks and current news.

The *Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Review* can be accessed online at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/oefoif](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/oefoif). Click on “Resources and Materials” in the upper right box to link to an electronic edition. Veterans also can order free hard-copy subscriptions at the site as well.

## Benefit Payments Will Go Paperless

Within two years, the federal government plans to phase out paper checks for benefits—including VA compensation pay-

ments. Veterans receiving paper checks will need to switch to direct deposit by March 1, 2013. Those applying for benefits on or after May 1, 2011, will receive their payments electronically.

Benefit recipients also can choose to have their payments deposited into a Direct Express debit MasterCard account. More than 1.5 million beneficiaries have signed up for the Direct Express program since 2008.

According to the Treasury Department, the change to a paperless system will save taxpayers \$120 million annually and will save Social Security \$1 billion over the next 10 years. Treasury says veterans receiving paper checks can switch to direct deposit by calling its processing center at 1-800-333-1795, talk directly with their bank or credit union or access [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org).

## -----LEGISLATION-----

### GI Bill Changes Coming in August

President Obama in January signed into law a bill that offers more benefits for some veterans, cuts benefits for others and reduces projected costs to the federal government. *P.L. 111-377*, the *Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act*, is designed to fix problems that arose during the first year of the bill's implementation.

But those changes "create even more inequities," according to a former ranking member of the House VA Committee.

"If you went out and surveyed the average student-veteran, I believe they would oppose improving their own benefits at the expense of some of their comrades," said former Rep. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.).

Most of the changes take effect Aug. 1, 2011. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that this latest version of the *Post-9/11 GI Bill* will save the government \$734 million over 10 years.

Here are the main **upgrades** in benefits:

- National Guard and Reserve troops can apply their active-duty time since Aug. 1, 2009, as part of the Active Guard and Reserve and mobilizations, toward earning benefits.
- Active-duty troops and their spouses using transferred benefits will be eligible for the \$1,000 book allowance.
- Distance-learning students will be eligible for one-half of the national average living stipend.
- Fees for licensure and certification tests, as well as living stipends, for veterans pursuing vocational training will be covered.

The law also **cuts** or **modifies** some existing benefits:

- Living stipends for students attending less than full time will be prorated.
- Payment for active-duty troops attending private schools will be capped at \$17,500 annually, but they can still apply for *Yellow Ribbon Program* benefits to cover fees exceeding

the cap at schools that participate.

- Troops released from active-duty because of medical or hardship conditions that are not service-connected will now be required to have an honorable discharge.
- Family members can only use transferred benefits from one service member at a time.
- Benefits will no longer be paid between school terms, except in emergencies, such as when schools are closed by presidential order.

### Law Forces Accounting at Arlington

A law enacted in December seeks to ensure better management of Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. *Public Law 111-339* requires the Army secretary to provide Congress a full accounting of all 320,000 graves and an evaluation of management practices at the Army-run cemetery.

According to the House VA Committee, the law requires a report by Dec. 22, 2011, that includes notification of any gravesite discrepancies, an accounting of all contracts and a status update on implementation of recent Army directives.

## -----SECURITY-----

### One in Five Flunk Army Entry Test

One in five high school graduates who took the Army's entrance exam between 2004 and 2009 failed to qualify, according to a report from a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit educational organization. Results showed a marked disparity in failure rates among white, black and Hispanic applicants.

The Education Trust, which seeks to improve America's K-12 education systems, issued the report *Shut Out of the Military* in December. It is billed as the first-ever public analysis of data from the Army's Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)—which determines if applicants qualify to enlist in the military.

It studied results from nearly 350,000 high-school graduates aged 17-20 and focused on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), comprised of four academic subsets of the ASVAB. Here are some of the findings:

- The failure rate for whites was 16%, 29% for Hispanics and 39% for blacks.
- More than 43% of white recruits scored in the top two categories on the AFQT, while less than 25% of Hispanic recruits and less than 18% of black recruits scored in this range.
- The states in which more than 30% of applicants scored too low to enlist were Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi and Washington, D.C.
- States with less than 15% failure rates were Idaho, Indiana, Nebraska, New Hampshire and Wyoming.

For more information—including The Education Trust's full report—access [www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org).



**For more information** about specific legislation or VA benefits, contact VFW's Washington Office at [vfw@vfw.org](mailto:vfw@vfw.org). A member of VFW's National Veterans Service staff will respond as soon as possible.



# Women in WAR

From clerks to nurses to logistic specialists to flight crews, female military personnel have served up front. These seven vignettes are just a sampling from six wars. **By Janie Blankenship**

**T**oday, women are serving in the military in greater numbers than ever before. But it was the women stationed in war zones throughout U.S. military history who paved the way for those in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the book *A Few Good Women: America's Military Women from World War I to the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), Evelyn M. Monahan and Rosemary Neidel-Greenlee pay homage to the females who have served our country. Here is a look at some of their stories, as well as a few not included in the book.



## WWII: WACs in Europe

During WWII, some 54,700 women served overseas. It was the largest-ever deployment of female troops up until that time. While the majority of these women were nurses, 17,000 served in administrative positions.

Formed on May 12, 1942, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) sent five females to England in November that same year. Officers Alene Drezmal, Louise Anderson, Martha E. Rogers, Ruth Briggs and Mattie Pinette left for Algiers, Algeria just one month after arriving in England.

In response to Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's request for secretaries fluent in French, the five boarded a troopship bound for North Africa. Air travel would have been faster, but it was thought that sea transport was actually safer. Only one day out of port, the ship was hit by a German torpedo.

The ship caught fire and began to sink. Three of the WAACs got to the deck in time to climb aboard lifeboats. Briggs

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA



Maj. Charity Adams and Capt. Abbie N. Campbell review the first contingent of the all-black female 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion at Ft. Des Moines Iowa, 1942.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES #11-SC-181934, COURTESY WOMEN'S MEMORIAL FOUNDATION COLLECTION

steered the boat as Rogers rowed. Pinette pulled five soldiers from the water and into her lifeboat.

After a night at sea, the group was rescued the following morning by a British destroyer, which also had earlier rescued Drezmal and Anderson.

When the officers finally arrived in Algiers, they had nothing but the clothes on their backs. They were issued the smallest men's uniforms available. Gen. George C. Marshall, Army chief of staff, was in North Africa to attend the Casablanca Conference. He told the women that once he got back to the States, he would replace their personal effects lost when the ship sank.

Since WAACs had no real military standing, the government refused to replace their belongings. So Marshall paid for the items out of his own pocket.

On July 1, 1943, President Roosevelt signed *Public Law 110*, officially establishing the Women's Army Corps (WAC) as a component of the U.S. Army. It was no longer an auxiliary.

WACs would play an important role

The first members of the WAAC to serve abroad flew to England in 1942, and then sailed a month later for North Africa. They are Alene Drezmal, Louise Anderson, Martha E. Rogers, Ruth Briggs and Mattie Pinette.

during the war.

In 1944, for the first time, some 800 black women were requested for mail duty in Europe.

Assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, they arrived in England on Feb. 12, 1945.

The officer in charge was Maj. Charity Adams, the first black woman commissioned as a WAC officer. She was later promoted to lieutenant colonel. Adams was at Ohio State University working on a master's degree in vocational psychology when she entered the Army in 1942.

"As the 6888th maintained its efficiency," Adams later reported, "we were inspected, visited, greeted, checked out, congratulated, called upon, supervised and reviewed by every officer of any rank in the United Kingdom who could come up with an excuse to come to

Birmingham [the unit's base]."

The primary responsibility of the 6888th was to re-direct all V-mail (mail reduced to microfilm for shipment) for Europe. The battalion's motto was "No mail, low morale." Unit members worked seven days a week in three eight-hour shifts.

The unit, later based in Rouen, France, and Paris, routed mail—much of it backed up at English warehouses in the chaos that followed the Battle of the Bulge—to millions of members of the armed forces in Europe.

Members of the 6888th were the first black women many Britons in Birmingham had ever seen, and they shattered stereotypes.

"These WACs are very different from the colored women portrayed on the films, where they are usually either domestics or the outspoken old-retainer type or sloe-eyed sirens given to gaudiness of costume and eccentricity in dress," *The Birmingham Sunday Mercury* wrote. "The WACs have dignity and proper reserve."

## Korean War: Nurses, 1950

At 24, Army Lt. Margaret Gibson found herself shivering as she crossed the Inchon, Korea, beachhead. Serving with the 121st Evacuation Hospital, just behind the Marines, Gibson had only the summer uniforms issued to her by the Army.

"General MacArthur had told all of us in Korea that we would be home for Christmas," Gibson recalled, "but that didn't turn out to be true."

Christmas found the 121st in Wonsan, a town on Korea's east coast. While setting up, they were informed that there were about 5,000 Chinese troops in the area and that the nurses, doctors and medics were to defend their patients and themselves at all cost.

"How we were supposed to do that was never made clear," Gibson said. "None of us—nurses, doctors or medics—had guns, so just how we were to defend ourselves was a mystery."

Fortunately, the Chinese never spotted the 121st. Gibson next moved to Hungnam and later to Hamhung on the coast of the Sea of Japan to board the *USAT Ainsworth*, an Army transport ship.



Army Lt. Margaret Gibson served with the 121st Evac Hospital in Korea during 1950, experiencing harsh conditions.



Army Maj. Aida Sanchez was a medical specialist at the 95th Evacuation Hospital in Vietnam in 1971.

WOMEN'S MEMORIAL FOUNDATION COLLECTION



Today, Gibson says all people should serve two years in the military because it is part of “our responsibility.”

While she said she’s glad to have served, two things still haunt her memory. For one, Korea’s “below-zero temperatures” were nearly unbearable.

But “the absolute worst memory I have is of the Marines and soldiers getting killed,” she recalled. “I don’t like thinking about it because it starts pictures of them back then flowing through my mind—pictures that I’d rather not see.”

## Vietnam: Covert Action

Maj. Aida Nancy Sanchez arrived in Vietnam on Dec. 25, 1970. For the 38-year-old physical therapist, it would be her most unique tour of duty. Sanchez had been working at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii when she received word she would be departing for Vietnam before the year was out.

Assigned to the 95th Evacuation Hospital in Da Nang, Sanchez was asked to go on a top-secret assignment. She was told only that she would be required to travel outside Vietnam in civilian clothes.

Before leaving for Saigon, she was informed her assignment was to travel to Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, where she would treat Lon Nol, the country’s president. He had suffered a stroke and needed intense physical therapy.

She was asked to read the president’s

## Female Purple Heart WIA Recipients

WWII .....	100
Korea .....	3
Vietnam .....	10
Persian Gulf .....	6
Iraq/Afghanistan .....	741

**Source:** *Women at War* by James Wise, Jr., and Scott Baron, Naval Institute Press (2006), pp. 193-218.

medical records, but not take any notes or make any copies. In Phnom Penh, she stayed at the city’s finest hotel and was guarded by seven Cambodians and two undercover U.S. agents.

“They said, ‘We are protecting you. Anything you need please tell us. But you need to be quiet about it,’” she recalled.

However, she was the only one allowed inside the presidential palace.

On one occasion, Sanchez was called from her hotel in the middle of the night and driven to the U.S. Embassy where she was asked to try identifying men from photos spread before her.

“I said, ‘Excuse me, I was sent here to treat the president of Cambodia,’” she remembers. “Nobody ever told me that I was going to be sort of like a spy.” From then on, she would track faces in the palace and tell U.S. officials.

She worked with the Cambodian president for a year before extending her

tour another year. It was during 1972 that she experienced the “horrors of war.” She assisted Army nurses when Vietnamese wounded were brought to the 95th Evac Hospital at China Beach.

Sanchez vividly recalls one enemy attack in particular. “I had to count [several] heads and arms and put them together in the right numbers [in a separate body bag],” she said. “We had to take those body pieces and put them in body bags so they were the same color, and there would not be two left feet or two right hands.”

She calls the nurses she served with “incredible human beings.” On one occasion, she watched a nurse and a neurosurgeon save the life of a South Vietnamese soldier who had part of his brain exposed.

“He lived,” Sanchez said. “It was my turn to rehabilitate him. He could walk with a cane and helped me as a translator with South Vietnamese soldiers who were wounded and needed physical therapy.”

## Persian Gulf War: Managing Logistics

On Aug. 2, 1990, the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division was put on alert for deployment to the Persian Gulf. Lt. Col. Nanette Gallant, then a captain, was part of an advance team that went into Saudi Arabia and set up supply sources for those following later.

“It was very strange,” Gallant recalled. “By the time all the planes had landed it was me with 900 men, but nobody touched me, nobody bothered me. I felt like I was a regular teammate. That was a pretty exciting thing—I’ll always remember that.”

During the Persian Gulf War, Gallant first served as the division’s acting support commander, positioning tents and supply areas. Assuming her role as the general supply officer, she arranged for food and fuel for the troops.

Some 15 years later, Gallant served with the 82nd Airborne in the Iraq War.

Gallant was one of 40,782 women deployed to the Persian Gulf region; 13 were killed, six in action.

## Afghanistan: Saving Afghan Lives

Following the Sept. 11, 2001, Islamic ter-

Continued on page 18 >



PHOTO BY SGT. NEIL GUSMAN / COURTESY GX MAGAZINE

Sgt. Debra Lukan, Capt. Trish Barker, Staff Sgt. Misty Seward and Chief Warrant Officer Andrea Galatian comprise their National Guard unit's first all-female medical evacuation crew for C Company, 3rd Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment.



rorist attacks on the U.S., Navy Lt. Tracy Bilski was one of only three women to deploy to Afghanistan in November 2001. As a trauma surgeon, she was attached to the 15th Marine Expeditionary Force.

The Marines were charged with establishing the first U.S. forward operating base, Camp Rhino, about 90 miles southwest of Kandahar.

"Thankfully, we only had two major incidents where [the hospital] took a lot of casualties [Marines]," Bilski said. "We used everything. We used our drinking water and were able to get them off the base quickly ... we just didn't have the resources to keep them."

Civilians also were treated.

Bilski recalled a little girl, Riyam Shihan, whose skull was crushed after a door fell on her. When Shihan arrived at Camp Al Taqaddum surgical facility, her condition deteriorated quickly.

In the early hours of Oct. 14, an unconscious Shihan was flown to a higher level hospital. The medical staff that worked so hard to stabilize her doubted she would survive the required surgery, much less walk and talk again.

"Even when the Marines took off, we weren't sure if she would make it," Bilski said.

When Shihan walked back into the hospital a month later and asked for strawberry bubble gum, surgeons and corpsmen were amazed. "I couldn't believe it," said Bilski, who burst into tears upon seeing the little girl.

Today, Bilski is a surgeon with Mary Washington Healthcare in Virginia.

## National Guard: Evac Crew

In November 2009, four women serving with the New Hampshire Army National Guard became their company's first all-female medical evacuation crew.

Capt. Trish Barker, Chief Warrant Officer Andrea Galatian, Staff Sgt. Misty Seward and Sgt. Debra Lukan of C Co., 3rd Bn., 238th Avn. Regt., comprised one of the on-alert crews for Task Force Keystone. Officials aren't sure how rare the all-female Medevac crew is, but it is a distinction the company is proud of.

"There must have been another all-female Medevac crew somewhere, but I

haven't seen one," said Galatian, the crew's pilot.

C Company's commander, Capt. David Mattimore, said it wouldn't have been possible if Lukan, an avionics sergeant, had not become a crew chief.

Lukan, 43, also is the newest name on the flight roster. She enlisted following Sept. 11. "I just barely made the age cut-off," she said.

Lukan trained as an avionics mechanic but switched from the shop to flight crew. She deployed to Camp Speicher and Tikrit, Iraq, from 2005-06.

"My family doesn't know I'm flying," she told *GX: The Guard Experience* magazine. "They worry a lot, but I suppose I'll have to tell them eventually."

Lukan is an avionics technician for the New Hampshire National Guard.

Seward, 30, of Owosso, Mich., agreed with Galatian on the uniqueness of the crew. "Same for me," she said. "Never flew with an all-girl crew."

Seward enlisted in 1998 and has served as a medic for 11 years. She has four years as a flight medic and seven on the ground. She deployed to Kuwait from 2001-02 and to Baghdad from 2006-07, both tours as a ground medic.

When she returned from the tour, Seward resumed her job as a security officer at a level-one trauma clinic in Lansing, Mich.

Galatian enlisted in 1997 and served five years as an administrative clerk before going to flight school in 2002. She has served seven years as a pilot, including a deployment to Bosnia in 2005.

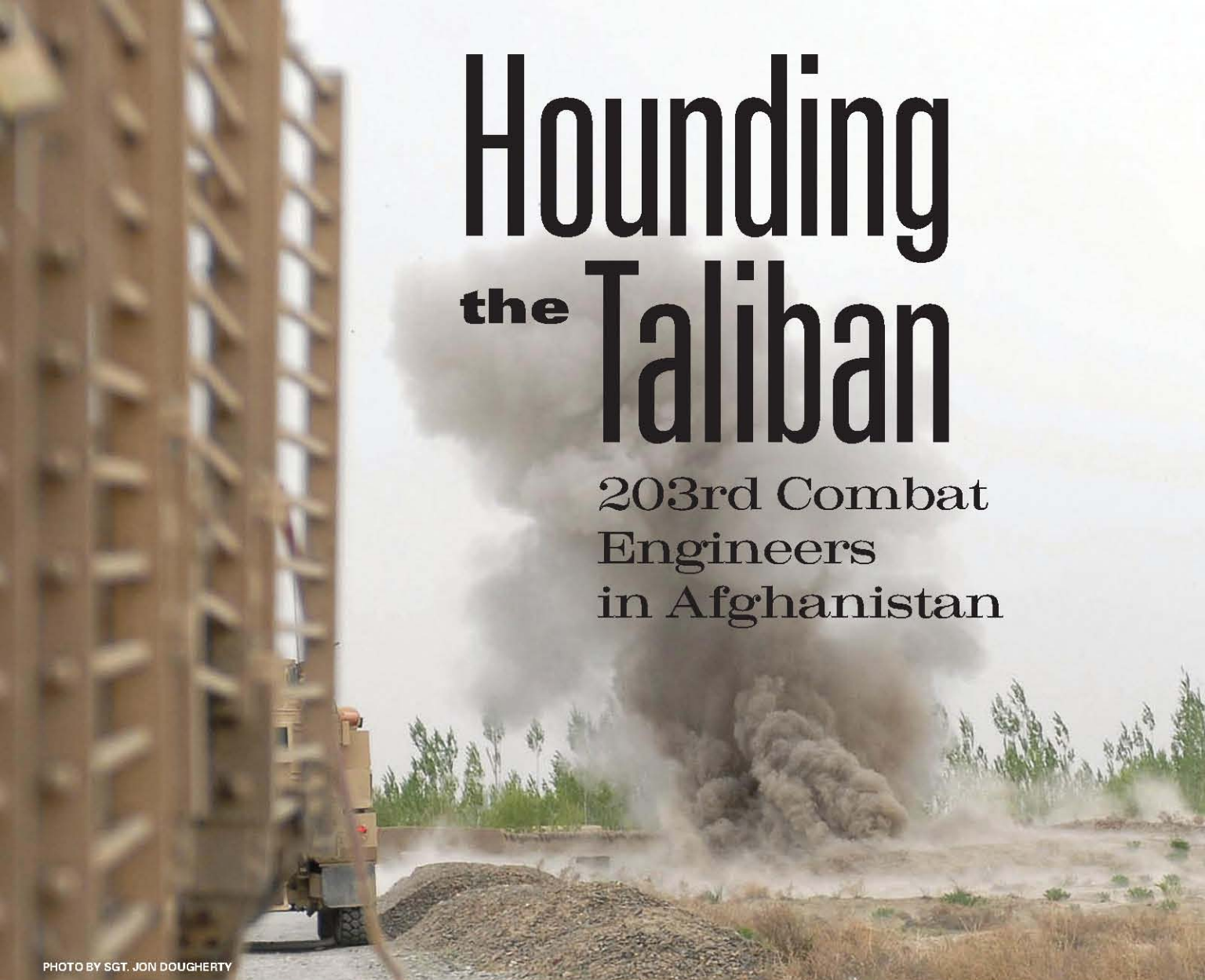
As a civilian, Galatian is the business analyst for the real estate division of the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Barker, 30, enlisted in 1999 as an aircraft fueler. She went to Officer Candidate School in 2003 and Flight School in 2004. A native of Menominee, Mich., she was deployed to Bosnia in 2005 as a medevac section leader.

When Barker returned from the deployment, she resumed her job as the state occupational health specialist for the Michigan Army National Guard.

Whether or not they were a first, the group says they are happy to have had this experience. "I'm glad we got a chance to be first," Barker said, "even if it is just first for us." ✪

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# Hounding the Taliban

203rd Combat  
Engineers  
in Afghanistan

PHOTO BY SGT. JON DOUGHERTY



By Richard K. Kolb

For the Sapper companies of this Missouri National Guard unit, defeating the enemy meant taking their primary weapon—roadside bombs—head on. Here is a firsthand look at the unit's mission, a snapshot taken in May 2010.

**Above:** Explosive ordnance disposal technicians blow up three IEDs in place in Paktika province, Afghanistan, in April 2010.

**Left:** Devices used to detonate an IED were found on a patrol. Dismounts on foot often find the ingredients for roadside bombs.

*All other photos by Rich Kolb.*



It starts with a prayer. Members of a 203rd Combat Engineer Battalion's route clearance package (RCP) all gather round, often with hands on shoulders. 1st Lt. Travis Miller, platoon leader of RCP 37, recites a solemn prayer as protection against what awaits engineers on the lethal roads of Afghanistan. This is a quick gesture, but one that provided some semblance of solace during their 11 months in-country between late October 2009 and mid-September 2010.

Their mission: detect and destroy the dreaded IED, or improvised explosive device, more commonly known as a roadside bomb. Such missions have ushered in a new mode of warfare, unique to Iraq and Afghanistan, at least in the history of American arms.

"Route clearance has become an increasingly all-consuming mission for the Army's combat engineers," Sydney Freedberg wrote in the *National Journal*. "The counter-mine mission has morphed into a constant battle against IEDs."

While uncovering land mines has been an objective in all modern wars, in these two war zones it has been refined to an art. Route clearance—countering IEDs—is the responsibility of combat engineer units, historically and currently known as sappers.

However, only a few officially rate that title. To earn the Army's prestigious *Sapper Tab*, a soldier must complete a 28-day Sapper Leader Course. Sappers support the infantry in direct fire missions. The regular Army, Marine Corps and National Guard all field Sapper outfits. And they are specialized for good reason.

### Enemy No. 1: The IED

IED incidents in Afghanistan skyrocketed from 81 in 2003 to 8,159 in 2009. In 2010, more than 60% of all hostile U.S. deaths (268) were caused by IEDs. These devices wounded 3,366 more Americans. Since the war started, 55% of all U.S. hostile deaths (617) in Afghanistan have been caused by explosive devices; they wounded 5,752 GIs.

Roadside bombs reach up to 1,000 pounds, with those most commonly encountered at 100, 200 and 500 pounds. Though they hold potential for immense

destruction, only 10% of IEDs actually kill or wound allied troops. This is a testament to the effectiveness of combat engineers. Spotting them is largely an intuitive, innate skill. "Natural hunters" with this sixth sense possess three traits: vigilance, precise memory and visual acuity. The best at the trade are often from rural backgrounds who hunted while growing up.

"Technology is great," says Lt. Col. Eric Goser, director of the Counter Explosive

ground-penetrating radars and metal detectors mounted on the front arm. The Buffalo Mine Protected Clearance Vehicle is 13 feet high and weighs 26-plus tons. Its remote-controlled, 30-foot hydraulic arm is used to handle suspected explosive devices and clear routes.

Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAPs), gun trucks, provide security. Weapons include the MK19 automatic grenade launcher, .50-caliber M2 machine gun, M240B machine gun



Staff Sgt. Sean Parker, battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Steve Stuenkel and Sgt. Steve Gillespie of the 203rd Combat Engineer Battalion relax beside a Buffalo at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, after returning from a mission in May 2010.

Hazards Center at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., "but it's still the human that needs to know how and where to deploy." In fact, 85% of IEDs are found by "human eyeball." This is often done by skillfully observing command wires connecting roadside bombs.

Trigger mechanisms vary in sophistication. They can be command-detonated, radio-controlled, booby traps or set off with a cell phone. Switching methods include pressure plates, spring-loaded releases, push, pull, tilt or command wires. Plastic jugs full of homemade explosives made from fertilizer can be triggered by a simple command wire.

Vehicles have been specially adapted to deal with IEDs. Huskies—wheeled vehicles with v-shaped hulls resembling front loaders—lead route clearance teams with

and the M249 light machine gun. Wreckers usually complete a package on convoy.

Command Sgt. Maj. Steve Stuenkel, who served with Missouri's 135th Rear Operational Cell in Iraq (2003-04), is intimately familiar with this equipment and the men who man it. "Serving with the 203rd in Afghanistan was one of the highlights of my National Guard career," he says. "I have never known a finer group of Americans."

### Redefining Combat

Because of the nature of the enemy and the technology employed to fight him, some aspects of combat have been redefined. The fact is that many times GIs are facing an inanimate object, not a living human being. Consequently, the services

have adapted, modifying the awards system to accommodate the circumstances.

Recognizing “the evolution of warfare and the realities of the modern battlefield” where troops are engaged in a “tactical conflict,” the Marine Corps changed its rules for awarding the Combat Action Ribbon. Beginning in May 2005, the Army also acknowledged the facts of terrorist warfare by including direct exposure to suicide bomber and IED attacks as qualifiers for its then-newly created Combat Action Badge (CAB).

Perhaps the new regulations regarding the Purple Heart are most reflective of this trend. Traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by an IED concussion qualifies for the award. The Army’s list of wounds that “clearly justify” the Purple Heart includes “concussion injuries caused as a result of enemy-generated explosions.” The Marine Corps requires that a Marine be knocked unconscious to receive the Purple Heart for mild TBI. New Army rules also limit soldiers to a maximum of five concussions to prevent

long-term mild TBI.

The 203rd’s casualties in Afghanistan are a good example of why these changes were made. Of 72 Purple Hearts awarded for wounds, virtually all were due to IEDS, and most were for concussions.

### Unique Battleground

Combat engineers fight two enemies: the Taliban and terrain. Some 77% of Afghanistan’s roads are unpaved. Regional Command East, where the 203rd operated, includes 14 provinces encircling Kabul, the capital.

An area the size of Pennsylvania, it is home to 400 tribes living near the Hindu Kush, a 500-mile mountain range harboring 15,000-foot peaks with treacherous passes like the world-famous Khyber Pass. The northeast provinces border Pakistan and its notorious tribal regions.

The 203rd’s area of responsibility roughly equaled the land mass of West Virginia. Its stomping grounds included four provinces. Units were based out of

Forward Operating Bases (FOB) Sharana, Ghazni and Salerno, for instance. Operations often cleared the way to remote combat outposts (COPs).

Treacherous terrain and proximity to the Pakistan border plays right into the hands of the Taliban and assorted enemies. Here, Arab and other foreign recruits linked to al Qaeda easily infiltrate across the porous Pakistan border. Perhaps one in three of those crossing the border is an Arab.

Today’s “Talibs” (Taliban) are fanatically committed to the cause of driving the Americans out and restoring their tyrannical rule. They are much more radical than their elders who fought the Soviets two decades ago. Some 80% are in their teens or early 20s; half the field commanders are under 30.

The Missouri and other Guardsmen would get a firsthand taste of this fanaticism before the 203rd’s tour was up. IED attacks, indirect fire and small-arms ambushes became a not uncommon part of the regular routine.

## Engineers Out Front in Every War

*“Combat engineers go unrecognized for what they do in combat zones,” said Vietnam vet Thomas Clark. “They have gone to war and risked their lives every day since World War II.”*

*Here is a brief overview of that service in six wars.*

### WWII to the Persian Gulf

During WWII, combat engineers—sometimes serving as infantrymen—paid their dues in blood. Some 7,158 Army engineers were killed in action: 5,508 (77%) in the European Theater and 1,612 (23%) in the Pacific Theater. The remainder died in transit.

“Engineers were committed as infantry during the tactical emergencies everywhere in Europe and North Africa,” according to *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Germany* (1985). Engineers earned their combat accolades, too. For example, at St. Vith amidst the Battle of the Bulge, the 81st Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB) garnered the prestigious Presidential Unit Citation (PUC)—equivalent to the Distinguished Service Cross—for its role in defeating the Germans.

On the other side of the world in Burma, the 209th and 236th Engineer Combat battalions participated in a grueling



Members of the 70th Combat Engineer Battalion work on a road culvert in 1965. The unit earned a Presidential Unit Citation.

two-month campaign in 1944, sustaining 127 KIA and 291 WIA after being pressed into service as infantry. They, too, received the PUC. On Okinawa, the 302nd ECB suffered 20% casualties in one three-week period.

Korea once again saw engineers fighting as infantrymen. The 2nd, 3rd, 13th and 14th Engineers all played pivotal roles in key battles at places like Yongsan, the Naktong River, the Yalu River and Pork Chop Hill. Among Army battle deaths, engineers counted 862. Another 1,844 were wounded in action. Eight ECBs fought in the war as part of a division, 21 separately and three as independent companies.

In Vietnam, engineers constituted 10% of Army troops

## Organized for the Mission

The 203rd is a prime example of how the regular Army, National Guard and Army Reserve integrate in the war zone. It reported to the 372nd Engineer Brigade (Reserve) from Minnesota, which fell under the 82nd Airborne Division and later the 101st. Stateside, the battalion comes under the 35th Engineer Brigade at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

In Afghanistan, the Houn' Dawgs, as the 203rd is nicknamed, commanded an assortment of companies. Three are based in Missouri: Headquarters, Forward Support and the 1141st (Sapper). Two other Sapper companies—211th (South Dakota) and 810th (Georgia)—rounded out the National Guard contribution. Also in the mix was the 693rd Sapper Company, a regular Army unit based out of Fort Drum, N.Y., and A Btry., 5th Bn., 3rd Field Arty, from Fort Lewis, Wash. Later in its tour, the 203rd took Mississippi's 287th Sapper Company under its wing.



On a dismount patrol, platoon medic Spc. Loren Bonebrake, Lt. Mitchell Boatright and Command Sgt. Maj. Steve Stuenkel with the 1141st Sapper Company seek command wires stretching from a road in the Sabari District of Afghanistan in May 2010.

servicing there. Among them were 20 combat engineer battalions—seven divisional and 13 separate. An additional eight brigade or other independent combat engineer companies served. All these units combined lost 609 KIA.

One of those KIAs was awarded the Medal of Honor. Cpl. Terry T. Kawamura of the 173rd Eng. Co., 173rd Abn. Bde., threw himself on a satchel charge in Camp Radcliff at An Khe, saving several lives, but sacrificing his own.

The PUC was awarded to three entire combat engineer battalions (4th, 8th and 70th), three companies, one detachment, three platoons and one squad. The 4th ECB received two PUCs for separate battles in 1967. The 8th and 70th battalions both earned theirs during the Ia Drang Valley/Pleiku campaign in the fall of 1965. The 8th lost five KIA.

It was not until May 2010 that Tom Clark's unit, the 137th Engineer Company, finally received the Valorous Unit Award (VUA). As part of the 19th ECB, the 137th performed exceptional service from mid-1967 to the end of 1968. The 19th Battalion suffered 105 KIA and 400 WIA during that time.

Engineers again stood out in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The 1st ECB, including the attached A and D companies from the 9th Engineers, received the VUA for breaching enemy defenses. Tennessee's 212th Eng. Co. led in Kuwait. Seven engineers of 1st Plt., A Co., 27th Eng. Bn., 20th Eng. Bde., died clearing cluster bombs at As Salman Airfield in Iraq on Feb. 26.

## Iraq and Afghanistan

At the beginning of the Iraq War, on April 4, 2003, Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith of 2nd Plt., B Co., 11th Eng. Bn., 3rd ID, performed heroically in Baghdad. Expending 300 rounds from

his .50-caliber machine gun, he killed 50 of the enemy and is credited with saving 100 American lives. His Medal of Honor was posthumous, and the first for an engineer in 34 years.

Combat engineers have been claimed far too often by the very devices they seek to destroy. IEDs inflicted multiple fatalities in four single actions in Iraq. A suicide bomber was the culprit in another action. Starting on March 31, 2004, five soldiers of the 1st ECB were KIA in Habbaniyah, the engineers' worst single loss in Iraq. On Aug. 3, 2005, three Georgia National Guardsmen of the 648th ECB were killed by a suicide bomber in Baghdad.

The year 2006 was not a good one for engineers. On July 8 in Ramadi, three men of the 54th ECB died in an explosion. Then on Nov. 11, three engineers of the 16th ECB were killed in that same city. Tragically, on Christmas, three members of the 9th ECB lost their lives in Baghdad.

Roadside bombs in Afghanistan also have taken a toll among engineers. On March 12, 2006, four reservists of the Army Reserve's 391st ECB were KIA near Asadabad. In 2007 on Aug. 28, three men of the 864th ECB perished in Jaji. On Oct. 15, 2009, four GIs of the 4th ECB died in Kandahar province. Last July 14, four soldiers in the 27th ECB made the ultimate sacrifice in Zabul province.

To date, 238 engineers have been killed in Iraq and 57 in Afghanistan. The Engineer Memorial Wall in "Sapper Cove" at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., will eventually honor them.

Throughout all of America's wars, the courage of combat engineers has been clearly demonstrated. Fifteen Medals of Honor are proof enough: Civil War (3), Indian campaigns (1), WWI (1), WWII (5), Korea (3), Vietnam (1) and Iraq (1).



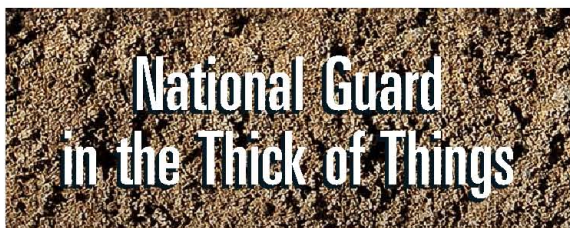
Missouri's battalion was not new to overseas deployments. In 1997, it did a stint in the Balkans (Macedonia) and served on a construction mission in Iraq from 2003-04.

Each Sapper company is made up of three platoons or route clearance packages. A typical convoy consists of five gun trucks, one Buffalo, two Huskies and a wrecker/maintenance vehicle for recovering damaged vehicles. Personnel include drivers, truck commanders, gunners, dismounts and/or camera operators. Medics, explosive ordnance disposal techs, Afghan interpreters ("Terps") and dog handlers are commonly part of the package.

Bomb-sniffing canines accompanied by their MP handlers can be valuable assets. The best breeds for detection work are German shepherds, Labradors and Belgian Malinois, with the latter rated highest. But they pay a price, too—10 dogs reportedly have been killed in action overall in Afghanistan and Iraq.

### Outside the Wire

Combat engineers take pride in the fact that they regularly venture beyond the safe confines of FOBs. Those who *do not* are derisively dismissed as "FOBits." Taking such risks contributes greatly to



### Ever since the 1991

Persian Gulf War, the Army National Guard (ANG) has been used increasingly overseas. Iraq especially saw an unprecedented deployment of Guard units in combat. Their casualties attest to this use.

In Iraq, ANG hostile deaths numbered 365, or 18% of the Army total.

Some 25% of the wounded hailed from Guard outfits equaling 4,119. In a single IED attack in Baghdad on Jan. 6, 2005, six Louisiana guardsmen of C Co., 2nd Bn., 156th Inf. Regt., perished.

Proportionately, Afghanistan has not seen quite as high a tally. The 106 hostile Guard deaths there equate to 16.5% of

the Army total. Whereas their 957 WIA represent 18% of all U.S. wounded.

Guard courage is evident in other ways, too. Staff Sgt. Timothy Nein of the Kentucky National Guard's 617th MP Company was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroism on March 20, 2005, at Salman Pak, Iraq.

National Guardsmen have served in virtually every capacity in both war zones, including all the combat arms. They continue to play a vital battlefield role in Afghanistan.

*esprit de corps*, as it always has.

Kansas City's "Bloodhounds" of the 1141st Sapper Company lived up to their motto of "This Dog Hunts." They conducted 360 clearance patrols covering 11,406 miles and found 178 IEDs.

Helping make this all happen were the six men manning the Tactical Operations Center. Sgt. Don Ferguson,

a Marine vet who later joined the Guard, says proudly, "We made one heck of a team."

The company's CO, Capt. Brian Sayer, is highly experienced at IED warfare. He survived 25 blasts and endured 10 concussions during two tours in Iraq, earning him four Purple Hearts. "Route clearance as we know it today is unique to these wars," he says. "The equipment is totally different from previous conflicts. Clearance was in its infancy in Iraq in 2003-04. But the vehicles we are using in Afghanistan are incredible."

Nonetheless, the dangers are all too real. "Our company has the highest IED find rate in the battalion," he said. "Using innovative detection methods paid off. Generally, the IEDs were planted by individuals or pairs of Afghans. A lot of the motivation for the attacks was just plain financial—they were paid to do it by the Taliban."

Staff Sgt. Sean Parker, a truck commander in the 1141st and two-tour Iraq vet, knows the perils of clearing Afghanistan's roads firsthand. He was in a vehicle that was taken out by a suicide car bomber and spent two weeks in the hospital. "We got hit by a 250-pound car bomb that blew the Buffalo 30 feet and turned it 180 degrees," he vividly recalls. "The hatches blew wide open. Fire engulfed the whole vehicle, it



211th Sapper Company (South Dakota National Guard) 1st Sgt. Wade Hofer and 203rd Battalion Public Affairs NCO Sgt. Jon Dougherty (who often doubled as a dismount) check an Afghan village in May 2010. Curious children commonly approached GIs.

Continued on page 26 ➤

resembled a flaming fireball. I had to be medevaced back to base.”

Sgt. Steve Gillespie, a Buffalo driver who also served in Iraq, is one of the 203rd’s VFW members. “I joined in 2007 while passing through Fort McCoy in Wisconsin upon my return from Iraq,” he said. “I value the camaraderie. Fellow war vets can genuinely relate to what you have been through.”

### Tracing the Wires

They are called dismounts. These are the men who exit the vehicle to trace the source, sometimes more than 1,600 yards away, of IEDs the old-fashioned way: on foot. Six dismounts—three on each side—span out to cover both sides of the route. On occasion, they actually capture the triggermen. For engineers who have the MOS of 21 Bravo, this is not an unexpected duty. As one soldier remarked, in this capacity, they are playing the role of infantrymen.

Lt. Mitchell Boatright led 2nd Platoon or RCP 7. A veteran of a previous Afghanistan tour and of Kosovo, he says “the patrols try to remain unpredictable by doing unconventional things. This really made an impact, leading to 70 [later 98] IED finds. But because we pull the plug on IEDs, that makes us a target for the Taliban. Still, it is essential to be aggressive and keep them off guard by conducting pre-emptive clearance.”

Sgt. Bucksly Barnhill understands that objective well. After finding an element to an IED, he spoke for many when he said, “It may not seem like much, but this component contributes to the deaths of far too many people. Finding them helps save lives, both American and Afghan.”

Patrolling out in the field is preferable to being confined at FOBs, at least for some soldiers. Spc. Jacob Cook, an Iraq vet, likes the camaraderie of the 203rd, so he eagerly went on the Afghanistan deployment. “On foot patrols you have the opportunity to cross the countryside and intermingle with villagers. Not to mention the satisfaction of being part of discovering an IED wire,” he said.

Sgt. Jon Dougherty, battalion public affairs NCO, doubled as a dismount when he covered missions. “When I was

## 101st on the Front Lines

**Fighting in the same area** of operations as the 203rd, the 187th Infantry Regiment (“Rakkasans”), 101st Airborne Division, traversed Khost, Paktika and Paktya provinces. Combat outposts, such as Sabari and Chergotah, occupied by the Screaming Eagles were likely clearing destinations for the engineers.

The 101st, however, in 2010 was spread throughout Afghanistan. With 20,000—all four of its brigade combat teams and aviation brigade—troops in-country, the division constituted 20% of total U.S. forces there.

And no unit was hit harder by the enemy, sustaining one in five U.S. deaths in 2010. By year’s end, 105 members of the division had been killed right through Dec. 31. (During its 2005-06 Iraq tour, it had 105 members killed.) Between

March and August alone, 41 were KIA and 400 WIA.

The Taliban used all means to kill the paratroopers, and all too often in multiple numbers in single actions. On June 7 in Konar, the 2nd Bn., 327th Inf. Regt. (IR), lost four men to a roadside bomb.

Non-hostile incidents occurred as well. A UH-60 Black Hawk crash-landing in Dalat on Sept. 21 claimed five aviators of the 101st Avn. Bde. The deaths of four sailors aboard brought the total to nine, the worst such toll in four years.



Then on Nov. 13 in Kandahar province, a suicide bomber detonated his vest, killing three paratroopers of the 2nd Bn., 502nd IR.

In what is a relatively rare action in Afghanistan, five airborne soldiers of A Co., 1st Bn., 327th IR, were KIA by small-arms fire in a firefight on Nov. 14. For Americans, that is a high tally in a single engagement. The six-hour gun battle occurred during *Operation Bulldog Bite*, a clearing mission in the Watapur Valley, a main artery of the Pech River Valley.

A lone gunman struck two weeks later, on Nov. 28, at an Afghan army post south of Jalalabad. In 10 split seconds, an Afghan Border policeman murdered six GIs of the 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav Regt.

Driving a minibus loaded with 1,000 pounds of explosives, a terrorist drove his vehicle near enough to blow up a building in the Zhari district on Dec. 12. The explosion collapsed the structure, which fell on members of B Co., 2nd Bn., 502nd IR, killing six and wounding 11.

As 2010 ended, 101st paratroopers were fully engaged along the Pakistan border and elsewhere. The 3rd BCT returned home in January.

out with Lt. Boatright searching for command wires, we were pinned down in a wheat field,” he recalls. “We had to low-crawl through irrigation ditches because there was no cover. Tracer rounds went over our heads, but we were not able to return fire. It only lasted two or three minutes, but it seems much longer in situations like that.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Stuenkel agrees that soldiers on foot are vital to the mission. “Engineers on the ground with their ability to rationalize the situation make all the difference,” he says. “The human element is the key to the battalion’s success. Our unit encountered IEDs ranging from 35 to 250 pounds. Sometimes they were found the hard way. A vehicle of the 810th from Georgia

hit a 200 pounder on March 16, 2010, and three men ended up in Walter Reed hospital.”

### ‘We’ve Made Contact!’

In past wars, it was called a firefight. In today’s Army jargon, it is “troops-in-contact.” But to the men in the field, it’s simply a “tic.” For combat engineers, that usually means an ambush after encountering an IED. A “complex ambush” involves small arms, rockets and mortars. They usually last less than five minutes. Still, gunners in the turret can return fire only if they positively identify a target.

May 8, 2010, will most likely stick in the minds of the members of 3rd

Continued on page 28

# VFW Offers Support on the Home Front

While the 203rd engineers were on the front lines in Afghanistan, back home in Missouri and South Dakota local VFW Posts were doing their parts.

Post 4288 in Corder, Mo., went above and beyond in backing the troops. Of its 110 members, about 25% are Afghanistan and Iraq vets, including hometown boys discharged from the service and area Guardsmen. "Our Post held dinners to raise funds and provided us with many care packages," said Steve Stuenkel.



Post 4282 in Perryville, Mo., did likewise. It is a model for all Posts to emulate, providing care packages and arranging elaborate welcome homes for members. "My Post is the center of social life with a family atmosphere and games for kids," says Don Ferguson. "About one-third of our members are from the current wars. With 370 total members, we get a fabulous turnout at meetings."

South of Springfield in Clever, Mo., a brand-new Post arose in 2009. And most of its members were from the 203rd Engineers. "Post leadership and members alike saw to it that we received care packages, our families had help when needed, and troop events were sponsored," says Mike Brown. "Post 12078 could not have been more supportive than it was during our year in Afghanistan."

Madison, S.D., home to the 211th Engineer Company, was not to be outdone. In true Midwestern fashion, Post 2638 did a great job of offering hospitality. "Our local VFW sponsors a family picnic each year," said Wade Hofer. "But that is only a small part of what it does. Dick Stearns did a tremendous amount of work on our behalf. The Post paid for \$6,000 worth of bus tickets to get us from Fort McCoy, Wis., back home to Madison after training."

## 203rd Combat Engineers

Continued from page 26

Platoon/RCP 9, 1141st Company, for the remainder of their lives. What started out as a relatively routine run along the route to Gardez ended up as anything but a standard operation.

"We were about 80 klicks [50 miles] into the mission, not far from FOB Hardball, when the crap hit the fan," said Sgt. 1st Class Marcus Arganbright, truck commander of the lead vehicle and acting platoon leader that day. "As is common in such complex ambushes, first an IED exploded followed by IDF [indirect fire, i.e., mortar rounds]."

Apparently, RCP 9 interrupted an ambush in progress. The Taliban were actually targeting a much smaller and vulnerable patrol of B Trp., 1st Sqdn., 33rd Cav, 101st Abn. Div., consisting of only four vehicles. Hidden among the rugged switchbacks, which resemble the mountainous terrain of Arizona, above the road, the Afghans sprang their trap simultaneously.

Despite an estimated eight mortar rounds crashing around the lead vehi-

cle, the convoy was determined to push through two abandoned vans blocking the road. "We were taught to always keep moving when ambushed," said Arganbright. The vehicles ran the gauntlet through the pass despite being raked by automatic weapons fire.

"It was hard to know what was going on with all the smoke and noise until we stopped later to assess the damage," said Sgt. Dennis Kilgore, a driver whose truck was peppered by small-arms rounds.

Staff Sgt. Chad Waters was in the Buffalo, which was positioned at the center of the convoy. "All hell broke loose after that first IED went off," he said. "An RPG round actually welded itself into the center panel of the Buffalo, fortunately doing only minor damage. It was the darnedest thing to see. The panel did its job. While in the kill sac, four or five other RPG rounds missed us. Mortar rounds struck nearby, too."

The ambush, while deadly serious, provided a rare opportunity to release some pent-up frustration about never being able to target the enemy. And the gunners took full advantage of the situa-

tion, firing approximately 2,000 rounds up the mountainside at the Taliban. An estimated 30-man cell, an unusually large number, staged the attack. (Islamic indoctrination centers in neighboring Pakistan send a steady stream of recruits across the border to wage *jihad*.)

"My targets consisted of puffs of smoke after enemy weapons were fired," said Spc. Denis Kisseloff. "Their fire may have included recoilless rifle. One of the other gunners resorted to firing his M4 rifle while retrieving more ammo for his MK19. Iraq was a picnic compared to here. These guys are warriors and they like to fight."

Sgt. 1st Class Bradley Burkhart wryly recalled: "We had enough fun to last a lifetime. I don't know how we ever made it through that run."

3rd Platoon leader 1st Lt. Charles Garbet, who missed the ambush because he was going on leave, regretted his absence. "It was a heck of a time not to be there," he said, "but it is nice to know how well the men of the platoon performed under fire."

Convoy gunners, infantrymen and a Kiowa helicopter combined took out a dozen of the enemy that day.

A sad postscript: When RCP 9 was conducting another mission in Logar province six days later, Sgt. Kisseloff was killed by an RPG round.

## Bird-Dogging on the Flatlands

The 211th Engineer Company (the "Coyotes"), headquartered in Madison, S.D., patrolled the barren flatlands around Sharana. In disarming 139 IEDs, its 113 men were awarded 18 Purple Hearts during the deployment. It completed 390 missions over 19,214 miles.

Gun trucks have three-man crews: a commander, driver and gunner. Company 1st Sgt. Wade Hofer was a truck commander on a patrol of the "Big Dogs" (RCP 10) last May. An Iraq vet, he said his platoon had found five IEDs in one day, a record for his company. "But the frustration is great because we rarely have the opportunity to directly engage the enemy," he said.

No matter how trying the circumstances, there are always men willing to do the job. For Spc. Patrick Wagner, military service is a family affair. "My brother served in Iraq and I joined the

South Dakota National Guard in 2003,” he said. “Though combat engineers may not be in the public eye, we are doing our part to protect American, as well as Afghan civilian, lives.”

Pfc. Jacob Busser said he would attend Dakota State University to become a teacher when he got home. “Being part of the overall mission is gratifying; it saves a lot of lives,” he pointed out. “Our company did its share, so we can take pride in that accomplishment.”

As the RCP 10 convoy entered a village last May, it was eerily quiet. Inhabitants seemed to disappear when the Americans arrived. One old man, through an interpreter, explained that the Taliban often frequented his village and intimidated the people. Consequently, during the patrol, any vehicles approaching the convoy were thoroughly checked for contraband. It was all in a day’s work.

### Other Companies Serving, Too

The third 203rd Sapper company, the 810th (“Hellhounds”) based in Swainsboro, Ga., operated out of FOB Ghazni. Because of the mountainous terrain, its convoys were especially susceptible to ambushes. In one IED attack in July, two of its members were killed in action (see *In Tribute*). Nonetheless, the company’s 80 members completed 328 route clearance missions, clearing 15,916 miles of road during their deployment.

Later in its tour, the 203rd gained another Sapper company—the 287th from around Lucedale, Miss., which headquartered at FOB Lightning.

All logistics for the battalion are handled by the Forward Support Company. “We conduct combat logistics patrols to the Sapper companies and other units to keep them supplied with all the necessities from food to fuel,” said Staff Sgt. Hubert Garren. “Patrols average a week in duration with a day or two at COPs. Afghanistan is more difficult to get around than Iraq because of the geography, and it poses more of a threat.”

### Mission Complete

By the time the 203rd’s tour ended, it had four men killed and 72 wounded (a minority of whom were hospitalized). Five of its gun trucks, four Huskies and five Buffalos were destroyed. The engineers recorded 74 engagements and

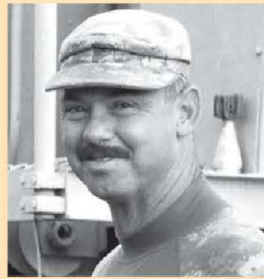
## In Tribute



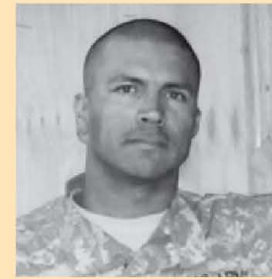
**Sgt. Denis Kisselhoff, 45**  
1141st Eng. Co., Mo. ANG  
KIA by an RPG in Logar province,  
May 14, 2010  
◆ St. Charles, Mo., Iraq vet,  
former Marine, 2 children



**Sgt. David A. Holmes, 34**  
810th Eng. Co., Ga. ANG  
KIA by an IED at Sayed Abad,  
June 26, 2010  
◆ Tennille, Ga., married, 3 children,  
former Marine and sailor



**Sgt. Robert W. Crow, Jr., 42**  
HHC, Mo. ANG  
Attached to 211th Eng. Co., S.D. ANG  
KIA in Paktika province by an IED,  
July 10, 2010  
◆ Kansas City, Mo., Iraq vet,  
married, 1 child



**Sgt. 1st Class Edgar N. Roberts, 39**  
810th Eng. Co., Ga. ANG  
Mortally WIA by an IED at Sayed  
Abad, June 26, DOW Aug. 17, 2010, at  
National Naval Medical Center  
◆ Hinesville, Ga., married, 6 children,  
Army vet of Persian Gulf War (1991)

took indirect fire 139 times. Some 424 members earned the Combat Action Badge. Army Commendation medals with V device totaled 26; Bronze Stars for valor, seven.

It conducted 1,516 missions clearing 66,936 miles of routes. Encountering 541 IEDs, it actually found 408 of them for a 75% find rate.

Maj. Mike Brown, then-forward executive officer at Headquarters Company and a 203rd 2003-04 Iraq vet, says he “served with a great bunch of guys. The relationships established in Iraq and Afghanistan will last a lifetime. I cannot praise these soldiers enough.”

Lt. Col. Tony Adrian, battalion commander, was equally magnanimous with his compliments. “The 203rd can

be immensely proud of its track record in Afghanistan. Our mission was to clear roads of IEDs, and, in doing so, save lives. I think our success rate in finding roadside bombs shows we accomplished it. But we should never forget that it was done so at the cost of four brave men’s lives.”

A chance encounter with Sgt. Brad Exline, an 82nd Airborne Division vet of three years worth of tours in Afghanistan, underscored the respect due the combat engineers. Shaking his head in amazement, he said, “Those route clearance guys have and do a hell of a job.” Indeed, they do. ★

E-mail [rkolb@vfw.org](mailto:rkolb@vfw.org)

Since 2008, the American Widow Project has connected more than 600 spouses of service members killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## Recent

# War Widows

## Helping Each Other

By Kelly Von Lunen



PHOTOS COURTESY GINA LEVAY-WOMENOFVFW.COM



**THE FACTS:** A roadside bomb in Baghdad on May 21, 2007, killed three members of the 425th Brigade Special Troops Bn., 4th BCT, 25th Inf. Div. **THE SOLDIERS:** Staff Sgt. Shannon V. Weaver, 28, of Urich, Mo.; Sgt. Brian D. Ardron, 32, of Acworth, Ga.; and Spc. Michael W. Davis, 22, of San Marcos, Texas. **THE UNKNOWN:** What the future holds for the three wives of these young men.

**T**aryn Davis was 21 years old when the improvised explosive device killed her husband, leaving her a widow. Four months later, she initiated a documentary project to record six other military widows' stories. The film debuted in Austin, Texas, in July 2008 for the "launch" of the American Widow Project (AWP). Her non-profit organization is dedicated to the newest generation of war widows, with an emphasis on healing through sharing stories, tears and laughter.

Since then, AWP has connected with more than 600 military widows, including

**Above:** Brigette Cain holds her son on the one-year anniversary of her husband's death. Army Spc. Norman Cain lost his life to a roadside bomb in Afghanistan on March 15, 2009.

**Left:** Taryn Davis started American Widow Project after her husband was killed in Iraq in 2007.

some who lost their spouses to non-combat causes.

### 'Me In a Different Shell'

When Davis learned of her husband's death at 11:30 on the night of May 21, she was referred to Fort Hood's Gold Star Family Support Center. But at the age of a typical college student, she didn't feel like she fit in there.

"I kind of just fell by the wayside," she said. "I was paralyzed, just trying to

"We have the camaraderie that our husbands had."

—Taryn Davis, American Widow Project founder

find something. I was given resources but they either seemed too outdated or they weren't too dedicated. I Googled 'widow' one evening and the response was, 'do you mean "window"?' I just wanted someone to give me a lot of details about what they had gone through as well."

High school sweethearts, Davis and her husband married before Christmas 2005. After his death, she corresponded with a fellow widow whose husband died in Vietnam when he was 18 and she was 19.

"She's a 60-year-old woman, but she knows me and what I'm going through," Davis said. "She's me in a different shell. She's gone through what I've gone through and continues to go through."

Davis used her husband's death gratuity money to purchase camera equipment and start AWP. In 2008, the Austin Film Society provided a grant to help create a DVD, and other funding has since derived from media attention and activities.

The first interview was with a woman whose husband was killed in the same incident as Davis'.

"It was very emotional, very hard to hear things and ask questions I didn't

really want to ask," Davis told the *San Marcos Daily Record*, "because they would correlate with what happened to my husband."

An estimated half of all service members killed in Iraq and Afghanistan have been married. Davis ordered 3,000 copies of her DVD and sends them free of charge to these spouses.

Jocelyn Mintzlaff was widowed at 25. Her husband, 34-year-old Staff Sgt. Brian L. Mintzlaff, died Dec. 18, 2006, in Taji, Iraq, from injuries suffered when his Bradley Fighting Vehicle rolled over. He was assigned to the 2nd Bn., 8th Cav Regt., 1st Bde., 1st Cav Div.

"This was his third tour in Iraq and he had come home safely the first two times and I never once considered it," Mintzlaff told CBS 11 in Dallas-Fort Worth. "We had talked about it for practical matters, but I never once considered that I would be a widow."

Mintzlaff felt estranged from everyone until she met Davis.

"No 20-year-old is going to know how to bury a husband, and no one around her is going to know how to help her," she told CBS 11. "AWP is definitely military-widow-to-military-widow,

sharing stories about our husbands and trying to leave a legacy for them."

Within five months, some 120 widows were involved with the project. Through the website, women come together from as far apart as California, Washington, D.C., and Texas.

"I thought AWP should be positive," Davis said. "It signifies my husband's sacrifice and my survival. I wanted to find others in my situation who could embrace that with me as well. For me just to be a part of AWP gives me a sense of what Michael felt when he was serving. We have the camaraderie that our husbands had."

AWP's hotline is staffed not by grief counselors, but by fellow widows. Official events include surfing and skydiving, rather than speakers and seminars.

"I went through the first year of my grief alone, miserable," Stacey Markham, widow of Sgt. Jonathan Markham, told ABC News. "I didn't think I could make it another day, and then I found AWP on MySpace and everybody just helps each other, encourages each other. It just gives me hope, makes me get up another day."

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## Caring for Survivors

**Wives of wounded** service members face another set of difficulties. *Operation Homefront's Wounded Warrior Wives (WWW)* was created for the spouses of wounded survivors.

Through on-site support communities, and a virtual community that includes an online discussion forum, WWW provides female caregivers with opportunities to build relationships, access resources and enjoy brief moments of rest and respite from their care-giving responsibilities.

Established in 2007, WWW is mostly Internet-based ([www.operationhomefront.net/www](http://www.operationhomefront.net/www)). WWW also has a Facebook page where caregivers and wounded warriors are able to share information, see upcoming events and meet others. They provide support to wives at two short-term transitional housing "villages" where wounded warriors rehab in Washington, D.C., and San Antonio, and a support group at Ft. Bragg meets monthly.

*Operation Homefront* assists military families coping with deployment and injury recovery. It also provides financial support to caregivers, even if not married. Services include:

- Shelter, rent, mortgage, utilities or temporary lodging.
- Vehicle expenses, car payments, car insurance or registration.
- Airfare to transport a family member during illness or childbirth.
- Child care during illness or surgery.
- Phone bills due to urgent overseas calls or medical necessity.
- Funeral and/or cremation expenses for military children not covered by SGLI.
- Personal property taxes.
- Emergency dental expenses.



PHOTO BY ROBERT WIDENER / VFW

# Veterans Courts Offer Second Chance

At least 20 states have some 50 special courts that give consideration to an offender's war record before sentencing.

**BY FRED MINNICK**

**T**he American judicial system is showing compassion toward war veterans.

More than 50 "veterans treatment courts" have surfaced across the country. First established in Buffalo, N.Y., in 2008, veterans courts allow qualifying veterans to undergo therapeutic rehabilitation outside of prison.

Veterans court proponents, like Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Ronald D. Castille, believe the veterans court system could be an answer to a serious societal problem. They say that crimes are sometimes symptoms of wartime trauma, and that the court system

should account for veterans' sacrifices.

Opponents say veterans deserve no special treatment. They say these courts are soft on crime, according to attorney J. Kim Wright, who is the publisher of *CuttingEdgeLaw.com* and is working on a documentary about veterans courts.

"Some prosecutors say veterans need to suck it up and fit back into society," Wright says.

However, momentum is leaning toward the current veterans court model.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, retired generals, renowned judges and even mainstream media, like *Newsweek*, have all spoken in support of veterans courts.

Judges like James P. Daley, a retired Wisconsin National Guard brigadier general, of Rock County Circuit Court, who have faced high numbers of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans

**Above:** Veteran Oad Porter waves his "graduation" certificate after completing a nine-month program through Kansas City's Veterans Court. Presiding Judge Ardie A. Bland honored five other such veterans during a December 2010 court session (see sidebar at right).

guilty of committing alcohol- and drug-related crimes, have publicly campaigned for their fellow circuit court judges to adopt veterans courts.

"I believe it is incumbent upon us to do all that we can to provide these returning veterans with access to treatment necessary to fully return them to their families and civilian occupations with a decent chance for long-term recovery and return to normalcy," Daley wrote in *The Wisconsin Defender*.

"For me, this means we must create a bridge between the services already provided to veterans by the VA and to the local and state courts that deal with the effects of a veteran's negative interaction with his community."

### Who Qualifies?

In July 2008, Kerry and Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) introduced the *Services, Education and Rehabilitation for Veterans (SERV) Act* to create veteran drug treatment courts, which would have created one federal system. But Congress took no action and it never became law. Thus, states mostly foot the bill for funding these courts.

Meanwhile, individual court districts were creating veterans courts under the "problem-solving courts" model that was established in 1989 in Miami, Fla.

Each court has its own parameters for veterans qualifying.

In the three California veterans courts, veterans must have committed an offense as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or traumatic brain injury in order to qualify.

Once in the system and overseen by a mentor, the court's mission is to provide

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### Veterans Court Founder

Judge Robert T. Russell, Jr., established the first veterans court in Buffalo, N.Y., in 2008. VFW honored him with its James E. Van Zandt Citizenship Award in 2010.



## Kansas City Veterans Court Sows Seeds of Success

By Robert Widener

**The veterans court** in Kansas City, Mo., is a good example of cooperation between municipal courts and VA. Most important, the program keeps veterans with minor offenses out of jail.

According to Kelly Winship, veterans justice outreach coordinator with the Kansas City VA Medical Center, veteran-offenders with misdemeanor charges such as public drunkenness, drug possession or a city ordinance violation can opt for the nine-month program in lieu of being behind bars.

"There are three phases to the program and the veterans must appear before a judge one to two times a month to check on their progress," said Winship. She added that VA covers the court costs, thus saving the city money.

Winship says that each veteran must first complete a physical and psychological assessment. Identifying needs such as medical, housing, employment, substance abuse or mental health helps to individualize a treatment plan. From there, the vet may be required to undergo random drug screenings, attend community support programs like Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, or agree to substance abuse or mental health counseling.

Veterans also are assigned a mentor who serves as a liaison between the

court and VA. Mentors directly monitor the veteran's progress so he or she stays on track.

"We currently have about 60 veterans in the program," said mentor coordinator George Johnson, a 22-year Army veteran. "That's about 10 more than we normally can handle, but we just couldn't turn them away."

But it's up to the veteran to be responsible and check in with his mentor, or face the consequences at his court appearance.

Presiding over the Kansas City Municipal Court is Judge Ardie A. Bland. As each veteran stands before him, he reviews progress reports, probing any problems that may have come up. Most participants have good reports, but any setbacks, such as being laid off from a job or failing to get a driver's license, get special attention. Overall, though, Bland adds another layer of encouragement to the whole process.

"You can do it," he told one veteran at a recent court appearance. "We didn't give up on you, so don't give up on yourself."

It is that kind of support that has made the veterans court in Kansas City so successful. Of the 20 veterans who have completed the program since it began in August 2009, none have been arrested for another crime. ★

## Veterans Courts Currently Operating

<b>Alabama</b> Montgomery	<b>Georgia</b> Muscogee County	<b>Missouri</b> Kansas City St. Louis	Philadelphia Scranton
<b>Alaska</b> Anchorage	<b>Illinois</b> Cook County (4 vet courts)	<b>Nevada</b> Washoe County	<b>Texas</b> Dallas County El Paso County
<b>Arizona</b> Tucson	Madison County	<b>New York</b> Amherst Buffalo Brooklyn Rochester	Harris County Nueces County Tarrant County Travis County
<b>Arkansas</b> Lonoke County	<b>Louisiana</b> New Orleans	<b>Ohio</b> Mansfield	<b>Washington</b> Pierce County Spokane County Thurston County
<b>California</b> Los Angeles Orange County San Bernardino Santa Clara Tulare County Ventura County	<b>Michigan</b> Detroit Ingham County Ionia Oakland County Traverse City	<b>Oklahoma</b> Creek County Tulsa	<b>Wisconsin</b> Lacrosse County Rock County Waupaca County
<b>Colorado</b> Colorado Springs	<b>Minnesota</b> Hennepin County	<b>Pennsylvania</b> Allegheny County	



non-adversarial treatment for combat veterans in the criminal justice system over an 18-month period. This treatment has worked so far.

In the original Buffalo Veterans Court, 90% of offenders completed a similar program without repeating their illegal behavior.

But many veteran advocates believe the system is inconsistent and ignores the one class of veterans who need it most: those who commit violent crimes.

## Violent Offenders

Some courts only consider non-violent offenders, such as drunk drivers or drug violators.

But it's the violence-prone who need the veteran courts most, says Robert Alvarez, a former Marine and Colorado-based psychologist with the Wounded Warrior Project.

"The courts seem to cherry-pick the cases they want to put in veteran courts," Alvarez says. "We stood these courts up to help young men and women who have uncharacteristically done some-

thing criminal as a result of their injuries from the battlefield."

Alvarez says some courts only want to take on "kinder" crimes, like selling drugs or stealing a loaf of bread from a 7-Eleven.

One of his clients assaulted a woman talking on a cell phone during a flashback. In Iraq and Afghanistan, cell phones are used to trigger improvised explosive devices.


"Here was a guy who had served in Iraq and had a bad case of PTSD," Alvarez said. "One night he's out at the pool hall with buddies and not intoxicated. He looks across the street and sees a lady on a cell phone in her vehicle. He goes into a flashback and runs over to the vehicle screaming: 'Get out, put the cell phone down! Put the cell phone down!' He's got a pool cue, assaults her and smashes her to the ground."

Alvarez said the woman was not seriously injured, but was emotionally upset. But she objected to the veteran going to a veterans court.

"This is a classic case of a war-injured combat veteran acting out because of his injury," Alvarez contends. "And the DA, because his victim objected, said no [to the veterans court]. These men and women are damaged because of their service to their country. They deserve this chance in spite of what some victim might say or object to."

Alvarez believes veterans deserve treatment not punishment. That's the disconnect in the court system, according to the psychologist.

"I've had so many cases of guys who have gone to prison," Alvarez says. "Prisons are full of mentally-ill and drug-addicted war veterans. These populations are treatable, a high percentage of them, if we took the approach of rehabilitating them rather than incarcerating them."

"But we'd rather spend \$60,000 or \$70,000 a year keeping an individual locked up in a state prison, than spend \$20,000 or \$30,000 a year getting someone the help they need to become productive citizens in society." 

**FRED MINNICK** is an Iraq War vet and freelance writer based in Kentucky.

E-mail [magazine@vfw.org](mailto:magazine@vfw.org)

# A Final Salute

VFW magazine presents this memorial listing in tribute to the 65 Americans killed in Iraq and Afghanistan during the dates listed below.

## IRAQ

Oct. 25-Dec. 8, 2010

### Deaths to Enemy Action ARMY

Pfc. David D. Finch, 2nd Sqdn., 3rd ACR,  
Bath Springs, Tenn.  
Sgt. David J. Luff, Jr., 1st Bn., 27th Inf.,  
2nd BCT, 25th Inf. Div., Hamilton, Ohio

### Deaths to Accidents & Disease, etc. ARMY

Staff Sgt. Loleni W. Gandy, 103rd  
Expeditionary Sustainment Command,  
USAR, Pago Pago, American Samoa

## AFGHANISTAN

Nov. 9-Dec. 17, 2010

### Deaths to Enemy Action ARMY

Spc. Shane H. Ahmed, 1st Bn., 327th Inf., 1st  
BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Chesterfield, Mich.  
Sgt. James A. Ayube II, 3rd Sqdn., 2nd ACR,  
Salem, Mass.  
Sgt. Edward H. Bolen, 2nd Bn., 30th Inf.,  
4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., Chittenango, N.Y.  
Spc. Jacob C. Carroll, 2nd Bn., 502nd Inf.,  
2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Clemmons, N.C.  
Cpl. Jacob R. Carver, 2nd Bn., 502nd Inf.,  
2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Freeman, Mo.  
Spc. Shannon Chihuahua, 1st Bn., 327th Inf.,  
1st BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Thomasville, Ga.  
Cpl. Sean M. Collins, 2nd Bn., 502nd Inf., 2nd  
BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Ewa Beach, Hawaii  
Sgt. Justin E. Culbreth, 1st Bn., 187th Inf.,  
3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.,  
Colorado Springs, Colo.  
Spc. Sean R. Cutsforth, 3rd Bn., 187th Inf.,  
3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Radford, Va.  
Cpl. Patrick D. Deans, 2nd Bn., 502nd Inf.,  
2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Orlando, Fla.  
Staff Sgt. Sean M. Flannery, 2nd Bn.,  
502nd Inf., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.,  
Wyomissing, Pa.  
Pfc. Jacob A. Gassen, 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav,  
4th BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Beaver Dam, Wis.  
Pvt. Devon J. Harris, Brigade Special Troops  
Bn., 10th Mtn. Div., Mesquite, Texas  
Sgt. 1st Class Barry E. Jarvis, 1st Sqdn., 61st  
Cav, 4th BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Tell City, Ind.  
Spc. Nathan E. Lillard, 1st Bn., 327th Inf.,  
1st BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Knoxville, Tenn.  
<sup>1</sup> Spc. David C. Lutes, 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav,  
4th BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Frostburg, Md.  
Pfc. Buddy W. McLain, 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav,  
4th BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Mexico, Maine  
Cpl. Willie A. McLawhorn, Jr., 2nd Bn., 502nd  
Inf., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Conway, N.C.

Spc. William K. Middleton, 2nd Bn., 502nd  
Inf., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Norfolk, Va.  
1st Lt. Scott F. Milley, 2nd Bn., 30th Inf.,  
4th BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., Sudbury, Mass.  
Spc. Kelly J. Mixon, 3rd Sqdn., 2nd ACR,  
Yulee, Fla.  
Spc. Scott T. Nagorski, 1st Bn., 327th Inf.,  
1st BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Greenfield, Wis.  
Cpl. Kenneth E. Necochea, Jr., 2nd Bn.,  
502nd Inf., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.,  
San Diego, Calif.  
Staff Sgt. Curtis A. Oakes, 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav,  
4th BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Athens, Ohio  
Staff Sgt. Kevin M. Pape, 1st Bn.,  
75th Rangers, Fort Wayne, Ind.  
Spc. Matthew W. Ramsey, 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav,  
4th BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Quartz Hill, Calif.  
Staff Sgt. Jason A. Reeves, 2nd MI Bn.,  
66th MI Bde., Odessa, Texas  
Staff Sgt. Juan L. Rivadeneira, 2nd Bn., 502nd  
Inf., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Davie, Fla.  
Staff Sgt. David P. Senft, 5th Bn., 101st  
Aviation, 101st Combat Aviation Bde.,  
101st Abn. Div., Grass Valley, Calif.  
Cpl. Derek T. Simonetta, 2nd Bn.,  
502nd Inf., 2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.,  
Redwood City, Calif.  
Spc. Jesse A. Snow, 1st Bn., 327th Inf.,  
1st BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Fairborn, Ohio  
Pfc. Austin G. Staggs, 1st Sqdn., 61st Cav,  
4th BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Senoia, Ga.  
Sgt. 1st Class James E. Thode, 1457th Eng. Bn.,  
204th Maneuver Enhancement Bde.,  
ARNG (Utah), Kirtland, N.M.  
Cpl. Jorge E. Villacis, 2nd Bn., 502nd Inf.,  
2nd BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Sunrise, Fla.  
Pfc. Christian M. Warriner, 1st Bn., 327th Inf.,  
1st BCT, 101st Abn. Div., Mills River, N.C.

### MARINE CORPS

Sgt. Matthew T. Abbate, 3rd Bn., 5th Marines,  
1st Marine Div., Honolulu, Hawaii  
Sgt. Nicholas J. Aleman, Deployment  
Processing Command-East, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
Lance Cpl. Arden Joseph A. Buenagua,  
1st Combat Eng. Bn., 1st Marine Div.,  
San Jose, Calif.  
1st Lt. William J. Donnelly IV, 3rd Bn., 5th  
Marines, 1st Marine Div., Picayune, Miss.  
Lance Cpl. Michael E. Geary, 2nd Bn.,  
9th Marines, 2nd Marine Div., Derry, N.H.  
Staff Sgt. Stacy A. Green, 1st Bn., 8th Marines,  
2nd Marine Div., Alexander City, Ala.  
Lance Cpl. Jose A. Hernandez, 1st Bn.,  
8th Marines, 2nd Marine Div.,  
West Palm Beach, Fla.  
Lance Cpl. Dakota R. Huse, 2nd Bn., 9th  
Marines, 2nd Marine Div., Greenwood, La.  
2nd Lt. Robert M. Kelly, 3rd Bn., 5th Marines,  
1st Marine Div., Tallahassee, Fla.

Lance Cpl. Jose L. Maldonado, 3rd Bn., 5th  
Marines, 1st Marine Div., Mathis, Texas  
Cpl. Sean A. Osterman, 2nd Recon Bn.,  
2nd Marine Div., Princeton, Minn.  
<sup>2</sup> Sgt. Jason D. Peto, 3rd Bn., 5th Marines,  
1st Marine Div., Vancouver, Wash.  
Staff Sgt. Javier O. Ortiz Rivera, 1st Bn., 8th  
Marines, 2nd Marine Div., Rochester, N.Y.  
Pfc. Colton W. Rusk, 3rd Bn., 5th Marines,  
1st Marine Div., Orange Grove, Texas  
Staff Sgt. Justin E. Schmalstieg, 1st Explosive  
Ordnance Disposal Co., 7th Eng. Support  
Bn., 1st Marine Logistics Group,  
Pittsburgh, Pa.  
Lance Cpl. Lucas C. Scott, 2nd Bn., 6th  
Marines, 2nd Marine Div., Peebles, Ohio  
Sgt. Jason T. Smith, Explosive Ordnance  
Branch, HQ Sqdn., Colorado Springs, Colo.  
Lance Cpl. James B. Stack, 3rd Bn.,  
5th Marines, 1st Marine Div.,  
Arlington Heights, Ill.  
Cpl. Chad S. Wade, 2nd Bn., 1st Marines,  
1st Marine Div., Bentonville, Ark.  
Cpl. Derek A. Wyatt, 3rd Bn., 5th Marines,  
1st Marine Div., Akron, Ohio

### Deaths to Accidents & Disease, etc. AIR FORCE

Senior Airman Andrew S. Bubacz,  
97th Communications Sqdn., Dalzell, S.C.  
<sup>3</sup> Lt. Col. Gwendolyn A. Loch, 96th Inpatient  
Operations Sqdn., Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

### ARMY

Staff Sgt. Vincent W. Ashlock, 890th Eng. Bn.,  
168th Eng. Bde., ARNG (Mississippi),  
Seaside, Calif.  
Cpl. Shawn D. Fannin, 404th Aviation  
Support Bn., 4th Combat Aviation Bde.,  
Wheelerburg, Ohio  
Spc. Ethan L. Goncalo, 1st Bn., 181st Inf.,  
ARNG (Massachusetts), Fall River, Mass.  
Pfc. Kyle M. Holder, 1st Sqdn., 38th Cav, 525th  
Battlefield Surveillance Bde., Conroe, Texas  
Sgt. David S. Robinson, 2nd Sqdn., 2nd ACR,  
Fort Smith, Ark.

<sup>1</sup> died at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center,  
Landstuhl, Germany  
<sup>2</sup> died at National Naval Medical Center,  
Bethesda, Md.  
<sup>3</sup> died in Houston, Texas

ACR=Armored Cavalry Regiment  
ANG=Air National Guard  
ARNG=Army National Guard  
BCT=Brigade Combat Team  
EA=Field Artillery Regiment  
IRR=Individual Ready Reserve  
MCR=Marine Corps Reserve  
MEU=Marine Expeditionary Unit  
MI=Military Intelligence  
MP=Military Police  
MTT=Military Training Team  
RCT=Regimental Combat Team  
USAR=Army Reserve

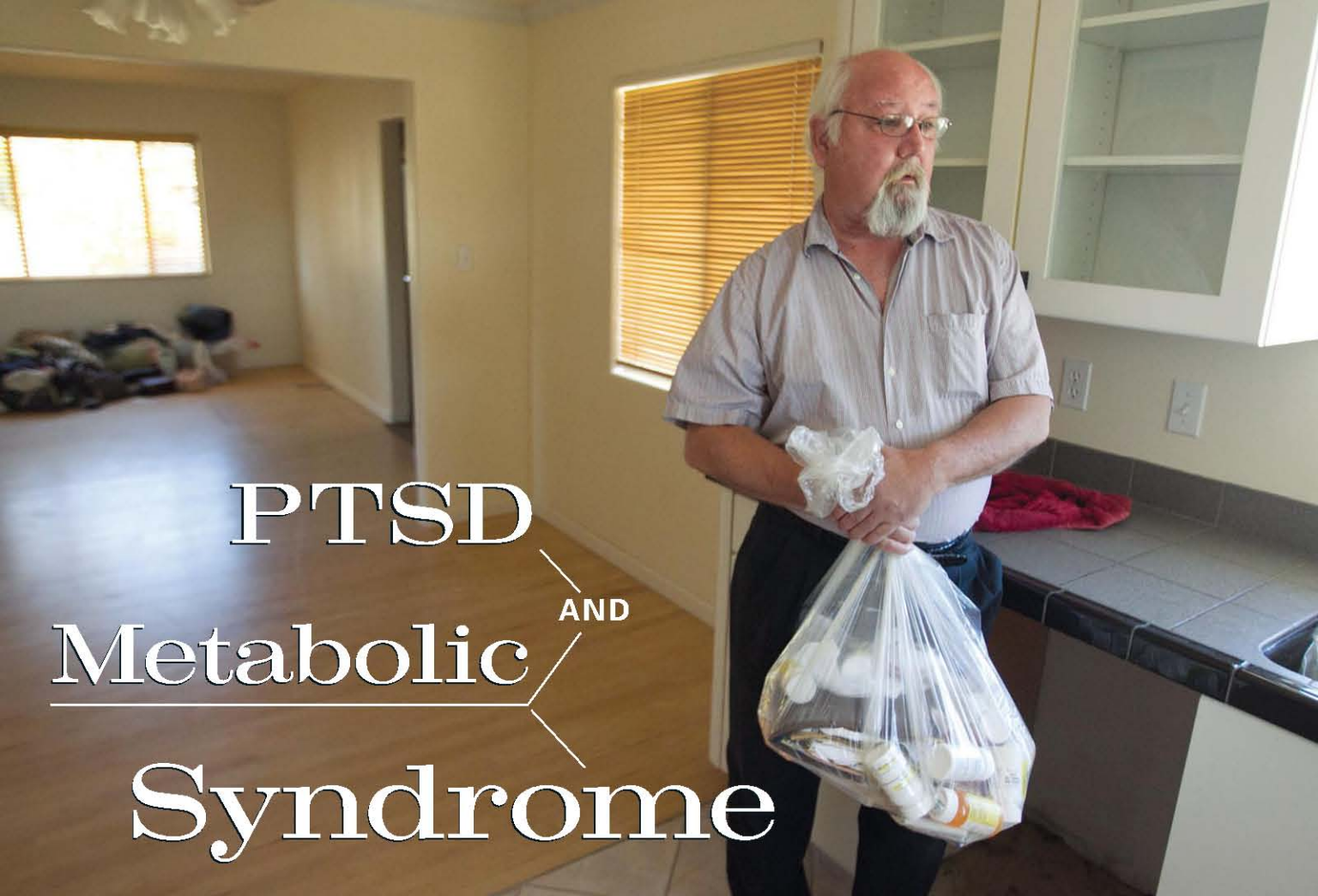


PHOTO BY DAVID WALLACE

# PTSD AND Metabolic Syndrome

Here are some tips to live by if you are suffering from these conditions.

By Janice Arenofsky

**D**isturbing flashbacks. Paranoia. Uncontrollable anger. Intrusive thoughts and night sweats.

Mike Frey, 61, a Marine Vietnam vet who served as a truck driver with the 7th Marine Regiment near Da Nang at Hill 55 in 1968, struggled with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for many years. It eventually took a huge toll on his health, giving rise to other serious medical problems years later.

Frey has been diagnosed with *metabolic syndrome*. Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions—increased blood pressure, elevated insulin levels, excess body fat around the waist or abnormal cholesterol levels—that occur together, increasing a person's risk of heart disease,

stroke and diabetes. Studies show that veterans with PTSD are more likely to be diagnosed with metabolic syndrome than vets who do not have PTSD.

According to the American Diabetes Association, PTSD patients with type 2 diabetes also face a 36% higher risk of complications like blindness and kidney disease than those without PTSD. They develop more heart-related problems and mood disorders as well. If depression is diagnosed, the risk of stroke or heart attack increases by 25%.

## 'I Was Mr. Macho'

Metabolic syndrome complicates Ray Meyers' life. A Vietnam combat medic with a dustoff helicopter unit, he operated out of Phan Thiet and Ban Me Thout. His outfit airlifted wounded per-

**Above:** Ray Meyers, 60, served two tours in Vietnam as an Army medic. He holds nine medications that he takes for his ailments related to metabolic syndrome in his Phoenix, Ariz., home that had been recently foreclosed on but where he still lived as of Dec. 9, 2010.

sonnel to critical care facilities, where he assisted with many amputations. These horrific images still haunt him as do flashbacks when he hears "that helicopter noise."

Meyers did two tours: one with the 247th Medical Det., 44th Med. Bde., from April 1969 to March 1970, and another with the 45th Med.Co., 68th Med. Grp., April to December 1970.

"I received counseling for nightmares, but I still have trouble sleeping,"

## Maximizing Your Metabolism

Meyers says. His marriage did not survive his PTSD, and he has not been able to work for four years.

Meyers managed to ignore his metabolic symptoms until recently. "I knew my blood pressure was high," he says. By the time he checked in at the Phoenix VAMC, he was 280 pounds—obese, even at 6'2"—and his blood pressure was 215 over 115.

Meyers also has high blood sugar and cholesterol. He takes medications for that as well as for his PTSD. But the drugs made him so tired that doctors had to reduce his doses. On the upside, however, he has slimmed down to 255 pounds and does "some exercise." But "I like to cook," he says, adding that this is one reason why he has not substantially revamped his lifestyle.

### Stop It Before It Starts

Can this domino effect plaguing Meyers and some younger vets be prevented? Possibly. One way is to reduce stress by eliminating multiple deployments. In 2009, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that soldiers who deployed several times to Afghanistan or Iraq logically reported PTSD at greater rates.

Besides cutting back on deployments, identifying personnel genetically predisposed to PTSD is key. The Defense Department will soon pilot a blood test designed by Allostatix that can predict PTSD based on the wear-and-tear level of the individual's body.

Scientists reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that morphine administered in combat reduced PTSD cases by 50%. Morphine is the "morning-after" pill, according to Dr. Matthew J. Friedman, director of the National Center for PTSD. Morphine's success has led Army physicians to experiment with anesthetics.

What's more, clues to prevention may surface from new diagnostic technology and gene analysis. Non-invasive brain-scanning techniques are able to identify biological markers in PTSD-affected brains as well as make it possible to review older drugs for effectiveness. And gene-tweaking scientists are hoping for breakthroughs.

In the future, physicians may individualize drug treatments based on genetics. They already know not to use certain

- Drink lots of water so your urine is clear.
- Drink two cups of Oolong tea daily to improve metabolism.
- Drink more ginseng and cinnamon in your tea.
- Keep your blood pressure under control.
- Sleep 7 to 8 hours a night.
- Exercise regularly for 30 minutes at a time to burn more calories during "down" time.
- Eat a balanced diet and avoid foods or beverages with high fat, sugar or salt content. (Sugar increases the risk of metabolic syndrome by 44%.)
- Drink coffee to decrease insulin resistance and the risk of diabetes by 25%.
- Practice simple stress management such as playing sports or watching a movie.
- Add more fiber to the diet.

Source: "How Do I Improve My Metabolic System?", [www.allostatix.com](http://www.allostatix.com)

## Online Resources

- VA's MOVE Weight Management Program—[www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov)
- My HealthVet—[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)
- Find studies on a specific medical condition—[www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)

## Are You Overweight?

**Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight that applies to adult men and women. As BMI goes up, the relative risk of premature death increases.**

CATEGORY	BMI	INCREASED RISK
Underweight	Less than 18.5	—
Normal	18.5-24.9	—
Overweight	25-29.9	13%
Obese I	30-34.9	44%
Obese II	35-39.9	88%
Obese III	40-49.9	250%

Source: National Cancer Institute's BMI and All-Cause Mortality Pooling Project

To calculate your BMI, go to:  
[www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi](http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi)

drugs. Some can worsen metabolic syndrome by increasing obesity; others can interact badly with other medications.

### Take Heart

When all is said and done, the prevention or reduction of metabolic syndrome may come down to self-help: a drastic change in nutrition and lifestyle.

Only a few years ago, less than half of

VA facilities provided weight management programs. But now that so many vets being treated are obese, all facilities offer so-called MOVE! programs.

The program concentrates on behavioral changes in nutritional choices and physical activity. It aims to neutralize or support vets' stress loads. Teleconferencing hookups are available in rural communities with a lack of facilities, says Jeff Lowe, with the VA's Telehealth.

Frey enrolled in Phoenix's MOVE! program and recently received prolonged exposure therapy for PTSD. He now takes meds for high blood pressure, high cholesterol and stomach ulcers.

A combination of psychotherapy, anti-depressants, daily Tai Chi workouts, anger management classes and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings helps him deal with survivor guilt and situations that formerly "bugged" him.

Twenty pounds overweight, Frey runs on the treadmill for 40 minutes twice a week and plans to start nutritional counseling to challenge his poor eating habits.

So far Frey has avoided diabetes and heart problems and wants it to remain that way. "I'm active," Frey says, "and I've gotten spiritual, but there are things inside me I'll remember all my life." 🌟

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# Sixty Minutes of Terror at Mary Ann



PHOTO COURTESY EDWARD MANSON

Though the Vietnam War was winding down for the U.S. Army in 1971, the enemy attack on Fire Support Base Mary Ann in March claimed 30 American lives in one hour of no-quarters combat. The Americal's 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry, and attached units sustained the single largest American loss of the year.

By Al Hemingway

“Most of us didn’t talk about it when we came home,” said Ed Newton of Sawyer, Kan., and a veteran of the 46th Infantry. “In my opinion, the media blew it all out of proportion when they mentioned the drugs and sleeping on duty. It’s time we set the record straight and tell the truth about Mary Ann.” Indeed, it is.



In the early morning hours of March 28, 1971, an estimated 50 sappers from the 2nd Co., 409th Viet Cong (VC) Main Force Sapper Battalion quietly neared their objective—Fire Support Base (FSB) Mary Ann—a remote outpost of the 196th Light Inf. Bde. (LIB), 23rd Infantry (Americal) Div., located in the western highlands of Quang Tin province in Military Region I of South Vietnam.

## Precarious Position

Mary Ann’s purpose was to provide a protective shield for Da

Nang and other coastal hamlets. Also, it was a jumping-off point for operations designed to disrupt the flow of men and matériel coming down the Dak Rose Trail.

Erected on top of a ridge, it “occupied two camel humps with a shallow saddle in between.” A series of ridges and hills enveloped the outpost on three sides, and thick jungle

obscured the field of observation. Described as a “shantytown,” 30 hootches, bunkers and other buildings were sprinkled over its interior. The base was 546 yards in length, 82 yards wide across its saddle and 136 yards wide at both ends.

Twenty-two bunkers, constructed from metal conex shipping boxes, were placed around the outer perimeter. Most of the headquarters buildings were situated on the southeast side of the base: the Battalion Tactical Operations Center (BTOC), company command post (CP), communications bunker, a sensor monitoring station, ammunition storage

◀ **Left** GIs arrive aboard a U.S. helicopter at Firebase Mary Ann. Situated atop a ridge, the base was hit by Viet Cong sappers on March 28, 1971.

bunkers, three mess halls, artillery liaison center, battalion aid station and fuel storage area.

The northwest end of the camp held two 155mm howitzer parapets, the fire direction center and the artillery CP. Also, a quad .50-caliber machine gun team was placed along the perimeter together with a detachment from a searchlight unit.

One line company from the 196th LIB was rotated from the field to Mary Ann approximately every two weeks and was responsible for its security while there.

### On the Perimeter

In all, 231 Americans and 21 South Vietnamese (ARVN) soldiers defended Mary Ann on that fateful night. Among them were the 75-man C Co., 1st Bn., 46th Inf.; an 18-man recon platoon; 34 medics, communications personnel, clerks and cooks from HQ Company; and an eight-man contingent from the 4.2-inch mortar platoon of E Company.

That crew was there assembling the remainder of the mortar ammo to take to FSB Mildred. (No heavy mortars were present that night on Mary Ann. Two mortars were sent to Chu Lai for repair, and the other two went to Mildred.)

There, too, were 81mm mortar crews from B and D companies; 20 men of 1st Plt., C Btry., 3rd Bn., 16th FA, manning two 155mm howitzers; and artillerymen from four other units. Finally, 22 grunts from A, B and D companies were in transit.

Mary Ann had been spared an all-out attack. With the war winding down, no one believed the VC would hit such an insignificant outpost. "There was a false sense of security at Mary Ann," said John Pastrick, an infantryman with C Co., 1st Bn., 46th Inf. "It was very lax all the time."

But on this fog-shrouded evening, 50 VC sappers, their bodies covered with charcoal and grease to make them more

difficult targets in the darkness, quietly slipped through Mary Ann's perimeter. Crouching low in three- to six-man teams, they made their way through the base's unsuspecting defenders.

### Struck With a Vengeance

They wasted no time. Under the protective umbrella of a mortar barrage, sappers struck the vulnerable BTOC with a vengeance. Lt. Col. William P. Doyle, the battle-hardened battalion commander,

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**Lt. Col. William P. Doyle drew his .45 pistol and pumped a round into a sapper's chest just before another satchel charge was heaved at him.**

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Soldiers clean weapons captured just prior to being overrun. Men of the 1/46th had unearthed a large weapons cache two weeks before the assault.

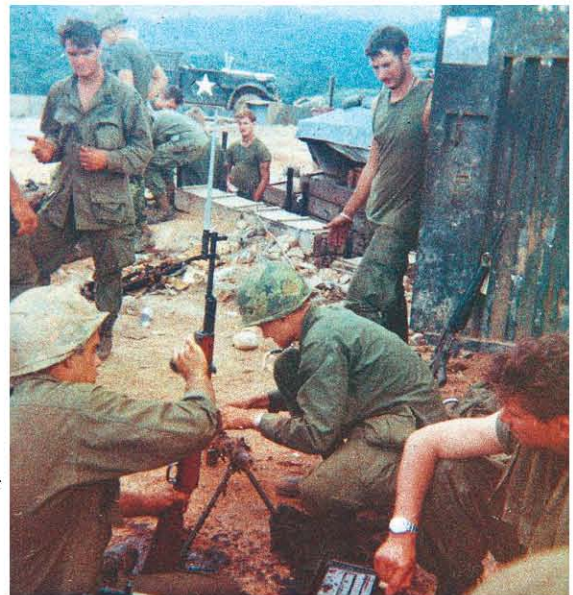


PHOTO COURTESY WILLIAM WALKER

was awakened when 82mm mortar shells landed with a resounding thud just outside his bunker.

To make matters worse, the sappers tossed CS (tear) gas into the BTOC. Choking and unable to see, Doyle was knocked down when a satchel charge exploded. Regaining his composure, he drew his .45 pistol and pumped a round into a sapper's chest just before another satchel charge was heaved at him.

The force of that explosion threw him to the ground, leaving him unconscious. Coming to, Doyle struggled to stand up, only to have a third explosion go off in the BTOC. As a result, Doyle was again knocked out. He eventually made his way out of the burning BTOC and linked up with Capt. Paul S. Spielberg, who had choppered into Mary Ann several days before with a three-man training team from Chu Lai.

Spielberg had written that he was "so proud of my men I could burst. When we were without food and it was cold

and pouring down rain ... there was good humor and the highest degree of cooperativeness. The grunts were clean in the jungle—no drugs." He earned his third Purple Heart on Mary Ann.

While the BTOC was being destroyed, C Company's CP also was being hit hard. Capt. Richard V. Knight, the company's popular commander, was killed outright. 1st Lt. Daniel J. Mack, executive officer, was struck in the right leg by an AK-47 round, shredding his calf muscles. He

feigned death while a sapper ripped the watch off his wrist.

Spec. 4 Carl D. Carter, a radio operator, was buried under sandbags when a wall of the bunker collapsed on him. He went undetected as the VC sprayed the room with automatic weapons fire.

Not so lucky was Sgt. Ronald J. Becksted, an easygoing NCO, who was killed instantly as he tried to escape the CP. Spec. 4 Thomas Simmons also was gunned down, but survived.

Staff Sgt. John C. Calhoun was hit three times and was lying near Pfc. Michael S. Holloway, who was frantically trying to tie a tourniquet on Calhoun's leg. As enemy sappers approached, both faked death. Calhoun survived, but Holloway was killed. As the VC moved on, one let loose a burst and Calhoun was wounded two more times.

Mary Ann was struck with such ferocity that its defenders were unable to mount any type of counterattack. Many grunts, who were asleep in their

hootches, were either shot trying to escape or buried alive when the satchel charges were hurled into their quarters.

### Mounting Resistance

A few soldiers managed to avoid the initial onslaught. Tripping over the body of a dead sapper in the confusion, Spec. 4 David Tarnay picked up his AK-47. As he carefully maneuvered about, he saw an enemy soldier in the wire attempting to leave. Tarnay took careful aim, killing him.

ments arrived, the assault was over. It had lasted just an hour. The results were disastrous: 30 GIs killed and 82 wounded. C Company was hardest hit, with 20 KIA alone. The Battery C platoon sustained five KIA, 25% of its men.

(Incidentally, website claims that some of the deaths were due to “friendly fire” are absolutely wrong.)

Maj. Gen. James L. Baldwin, commanding general of the Americal Division, arrived on the scene at dawn.

“The firebase was a shambles,” he

Hell, he was the division commander. It was a brigade and battalion problem. The day before we got hit they had us pull in all the sensors from around the perimeter.

“Kim, our Kit Carson Scout, warned us we were infiltrated. He said the enemy was posing as ARVNs on the base. One ARVN officer even inquired about the easiest way to get off the firebase to fish.

“We thought that was strange and nobody told him. In fact, the night of the attack, we took fire from the ARVN position. When we returned fire, it stopped. Not one ARVN came out to help us. And the enemy left them alone.

“We tried to tell the officers what Kim had said, but they didn’t listen to us. It was poor intelligence and gross negligence—plain and simple.”

Allegations of drug use also have hovered over the performance of the GIs at Mary Ann.

Platoon Sgt. Bill Walker, who was in charge of bunkers 15 through 22, has a different viewpoint: “Everyone was awake when I made my rounds. There was no pot in my bunkers. And I know what pot smells like. One soldier, manning a bunker by the trash dump, was dozing. I stayed with him for a few minutes to make sure he was awake, then I returned to my bunker. Not two minutes later, everything hit the fan.”

Sgt. Gary L. Noller, a battalion radio operator for the 46th Infantry, recalled: “The belief that the enemy would not waste its time attacking a force that was soon leaving anyway led to a false sense of security. And while drugs were present on Mary Ann, they were used only by a minority of soldiers.”

### Why Mary Ann?

Why had the enemy made such a determined effort to overrun Mary Ann? It was late in the war, and Vietnamization was progressing steadily. GIs were being replaced by ARVN units.

Timothy Baldwin, son of Gen. Baldwin, who did extensive research on Mary Ann to clear his deceased father’s name, may have found the answer: “The 1/46th was causing too much trouble from ... Mary Ann.” Just two weeks before the assault, the unit had unearthed a large enemy cache. Sgt. 1st Class Edward “Pop” Manson, platoon

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**“That commentary which tars the 1/46th Infantry as a ‘mob’ ... is grossly exaggerated. Most of the draftees on Mary Ann had already proven themselves in combat. And yet, however reluctantly, there were still soldiers like those in the 1/46th Infantry out fighting the war.”**

— Author Keith Nolan from his book, *Sappers in the Wire: The Life and Death of Firebase Mary Ann*

Sgt. Maj. Carl N. Prosser and Pfc. John A. Bruno killed another sapper trying to flee the area. When the VC returned fire, Prosser and Bruno manned the quad .50, while Spec. 6 Freddie Fillers, the chief cook, commandeered an M-60 machine gun. Between the two weapons, the trio let loose hundreds of rounds. At least three more sappers were cut down trying to make their way to safety.

A Night Hawk Huey gunship, with a starlight scope aboard, was the first aircraft on the scene. The chopper, flown by Capt. Norman Hayes, was from Trp. D, 1st Sqdn., 1st Cav. Hayes had to fly his helicopter at a higher altitude due to the thick smoke coming from the burning hootches at Mary Ann.

But the gunship did score some kills. “[We] ... could actually see the VC in the wire... It looked like they were trying to take people out of the wire... We engaged, and I know that anything we fired on ceased firing at us,” said Hayes.

In the end, however, only 15 VC bodies were found. Evidence indicated the enemy dug a few hasty graves to bury their dead before withdrawing.

Unfortunately, by the time reinforce-

wrote in a letter home, “with things burning all over the place... There were many [soldiers] who were sitting around with rather dazed looks on their faces, and another group which was actively and energetically trying to pick up the pieces. There were no in-betweens.”

### Intelligence & Negligence

The consequences of the attack were quickly felt. In the aftermath of an investigation, Baldwin and Col. William S. Hathaway, the 196th LIB commander, were relieved of duty. Both would retire soon afterward. A host of other officers were reprimanded, including the hard-driving Lt. Col. Doyle. He remained in the service until his retirement, but never received another promotion.

Many felt Baldwin’s reprimand unjust. “It was a political thing,” said Capt. John Strand, commanding officer (CO) of A Co., 1st Bn., 46th Inf. “Scapegoats were needed... What happened to Baldwin was wrong, but it’s not hard for me to understand given how big organizations work.”

Spec. 4 Ed Newton also felt “it was not right what they did to Baldwin.

sergeant of the 4.2-inch mortar platoon, agrees: "Charlie was after Company C ... they got the CO [Knight] in his bunker, too..."

Baldwin interviewed several Mary Ann VC veterans: they had no idea the Americans were about to abandon the firebase and turn it over to ARVN. "The VC," Baldwin wrote, "normally known for their superb intelligence-gathering, had failed on this issue."

That American courage was displayed on Mary Ann is indisputable. Silver Stars were awarded to Sgt. Elmer R. Head, Capt. Virtus A. Savage, senior medic Larry J. Vogelsang (a conscientious objector), Sgt. Ervin E. Powell, 1st Lt. Jerry W. Sams, Pfc. Paul G. Grooms, 1st Lt. Arthur D. Schmidt, Capt. Paul Spielberg and Spec. 4 David Tarnay.

In one legendary exploit, 1st Lt. C. Barry McGee choked a sapper to death before being killed.

### **Recognizing Hardships**

In *Sappers in the Wire: The Life and Death of Firebase Mary Ann* (1995), the late author Keith W. Nolan counters many bogus claims. "Unfortunately, we historians got it wrong," he wrote.

"I do not mean to whitewash what happened at Firebase Mary Ann with such a remark, for the incident was a tragic disaster with much to teach today's soldiers about vigilance.

"What I do mean to say is that commentary which tars the 1/46th Infantry as a 'mob' ... is grossly exaggerated. Most of the draftees on Mary Ann had already proven themselves in combat. And yet, however reluctantly, there were still soldiers like those in the 1/46th Infantry out fighting the war. Their hardships should be recognized.

"Author [Geoffrey] Perret got it right when he wrote that these troops who 'had faith in nothing much, least of all in men like Johnson and Nixon,' still 'served their country a lot better than it served them.'" ★

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**AL HEMINGWAY**, is a Vietnam vet and member of Post 201 in Waterbury, Ct.

**Editor's Note:** Vets of Mary Ann will hold a memorial service at Ft. Benning, Ga., on March 28. For information, contact Gary Noller at [gnoller@aol.com](mailto:gnoller@aol.com).



# KIA:

Fifty years ago this month, American servicemen died in a forgotten theater of the Second Indochina War.

## Laos, 1961



Note: Shown here is a Douglas C-47 Skytrain, similar to the SC-47.

By

Richard K. Kolb

Laos hosted its own little war before Vietnam heated up for the Americans. It was a three-way civil war between Soviet-backed “neutralists,” Communist Pathet Lao supported by North Vietnam, and the Royal Lao government aided by the CIA. Amidst this melee were deposited 107 Green Berets disguised as civilians in July 1959.

Special Air Force units also were secretly at work. On March 23, 1961, while flying over the strategic Plain of Jars, the *Rose Bowl* (SC-47 recon aircraft) was hit by 37mm anti-aircraft fire near Phon-savan. It was equipped with aerial photography and electronic surveillance gear.

Attached to the Defense Attaché’s Office from the 315th Air Division

Detachment, the plane carried two Army officers on its way to Saigon. All six airmen and one of the soldiers died in the shoot-down. (The burial site was found and four sets of remains recovered in July 1991, but three are still unaccounted for.) But assistant Army attaché Lawrence R. Bailey parachuted safely.

Captured by the Pathet Lao, Bailey recalled, “I was held in solitary confinement for 17 long, dark months in a 12-by-15 room.” Bailey was released Aug. 12, 1962, along with two CIA Air America helicopter crewmen captured in May 1961 and a Green Beret POW.

On April 19, 1961, an official Military Assistance Advisory Group, eventually peaking at 666 men, was set up in the capital of Vientiane. Three days later,

four members of Field Training Team 59 of B Co., 7th SFG, were lost in the Battle of Vang Vieng. Two men, Gerald M. Biber and John M. Bischoff, were killed in action at their armored car, one was captured and later released, and Capt. Walter Moon was executed in his prison quarters at La Houang on July 22, 1961.

Peace accords declared Laos neutral, and American advisers withdrew by Oct. 7, 1962. Quickly forgotten in the diplomatic shuffle were 10 Americans killed in an obscure campaign overshadowed by a far larger war. For those who served in the “Land of a Million Elephants,” their compact conflict would rate an Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal. 🇺🇸

E-mail [rkolb@vfw.org](mailto:rkolb@vfw.org)

### 10 GIs Were Killed by the Pathet Lao in Laos, 1961

DATE	NAME	BRANCH	UNIT
Mar 23, 1961	Bankowski, Alfons A.*	Air Force	Defense (Air) Attaché Office
Mar 23, 1961	Garside, Frederick T.	Air Force	Defense (Air) Attaché Office
Mar 23, 1961	Magee, Ralph W.	Air Force	Defense (Air) Attaché Office
Mar 23, 1961	Matteson, Glenn	Air Force	Defense (Air) Attaché Office
Mar 23, 1961	Sampson, Leslie V.	Air Force	Defense (Air) Attaché Office
Mar 23, 1961	Weston, Oscar B., Jr.*	Air Force	Defense (Air) Attaché Office
Mar 23, 1961	Weitkamp, Edgar W.*	Army	Defense Attaché Office
Apr 22, 1961	Biber, Gerald M.	Army	7th Special Forces Group (FTT-59)
Apr 22, 1961	Bischoff, John M.	Army	7th Special Forces Group (FTT-59)
Apr 22, 1961	Moon, Walter H. (5)	Army	7th Special Forces Group (FTT-59)

\*Still unaccounted for.



Biber



Bischoff



Moon

# VFW in action

VFW members and Posts demonstrating community service. By Kelly Von Lunen

## Oklahoma Post Helps Build Women's Memorial

*The Broken Arrow Women's War Memorial honors 103 Oklahoma female personnel killed in service.*

When getting ready to run errands one day, Jene Pointer was listening to a television program about WWII. A section on Women Air Service Pilots (WASPs) showed these female pilots being mustered out of service with no pay. Pointer started thinking to herself, "Someone should do something to remember these women."

In August 2003, Pointer and her husband, Ralph, went to the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary National Convention in San Antonio, Texas. On the way back, they bought a "Rosie the Riveter" hand towel, which got Pointer thinking even more. She wanted a memorial for women veterans.

The Pointers mentioned this to their fellow members of Post 10887 and Auxiliary in Broken Arrow, Okla., who got behind the idea. An original three-foot-by-four-foot concept became a 33-foot-by-seven-foot black granite wall-style memorial. Its 11 engraved panels depict women's roles in the military from the Revolutionary War to present.

VFW members raised funds to get the Broken Arrow Women's War Memorial off the ground. The city paid about \$183,000 for the fountain, walkways, stage areas and memorial base. *Vision 2050*—a Tulsa sales tax fund—paid \$58,000 for the fountain. The Oklahoma Centennial Commission provided a grant of \$50,000. The memorial is debt-free, but inscribed memorial bricks are available for purchase to be placed throughout the park.

"It [was] fantastic to see it come together," Ralph told the *Tulsa World*. "I went out there and watched as they put it up, and I just felt so proud to be a part



**Above:** The Broken Arrow Women's War Memorial in Oklahoma honors 103 Oklahoma women killed during military service.



**Left:** Gary Mosier, SI Veterans Memorials sales manager, Jene Pointer, Wilma Vaught and Ralph Pointer were on hand for the memorial's dedication in December 2007.

### The center tablet of the Broken Arrow Women's War Memorial reads:

To the women warriors of the United States of America, those who have served and those now serving, with pride and honor in the military of the USA, and those courageous women at home who supported the war effort by taking care of family and filling the jobs left vacant by the demands of war. Women became factory workers, farmers, builders, mechanics and did whatever was necessary in the quest for peace. Little did they know their efforts would leave an everlasting mark on American society and the world.  
Thank you and God bless you all.

of it. It's very uplifting."

When the memorial was dedicated on Dec. 7, 2007, in Veterans Park in Broken Arrow, 103 yellow balloons were released to honor Oklahoma women killed in service. Wilma L. Vaught, president of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, gave the keynote speech. She is a VFW member of Post 346 in Columbia, Md.

An "Oklahoma centennial project," the monument includes a memorial fountain, stage area and walkways.

"You can walk right up to the panel with three women in front of their plane and read 'Pistol Packin' Mamas' on the nose," Ralph told the *Tulsa World*. "We had lots of pictures but could only use the highest quality ones, and it really shows in the engravings." ★

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**Editor's Note:** If you know of any other memorials for women built with VFW help, let us know.

# membership

## New York Post Focuses on Women

*While it's predominantly female, members of Post 12097 say that all veterans are welcome.*

When Renee DeRouche joined the Army in 1982 at age 17 in Buffalo, N.Y., and became a medical lab technician, she wasn't too familiar with VFW.

She earned her VFW eligibility during the 1991 Persian Gulf War when she served with the Kentucky Army National Guard's 475th MASH Unit.

"After *Operation Desert Storm*, I joined VFW briefly," DeRouche recalls. "Someone told me I should join. I filled out the application and that was that. But I was never active and didn't renew."

In 1998, DeRouche moved back home to Buffalo and in 2000 she became a full-time recruiter for the New York Army National Guard. A few years later, she found herself overseas again in Iraq as a supply sergeant with New York's 42nd Infantry Division.

DeRouche said it was becoming more apparent to her how much VFW "helps soldiers and their families," which is why she decided to get involved.

She heard about some women trying to form a female Post in New York and was very interested. Today, DeRouche is commander of Post 12097 in West



Before their first meeting on July 25, 2010, the founding members of Post 12097 in West Seneca, N.Y., are photographed for posterity. Some 83% of the membership is women.

Seneca, N.Y., which is less than a year old (the first meeting was in July 2010). But getting the Post to this point has not been an easy task—a task that couldn't have been accomplished without a seasoned member like Marilyn Roll at the helm.

### Gulf War Vet Advises New Post

Roll came home from serving in Oman during the Persian Gulf War and was welcomed into VFW by Post 7275 in Lancaster, N.Y.

She recalls being in a Fourth of July parade in 1991. At the end of the parade route, VFW was waiting to sign up new members. A few years later, Roll's hus-

band bought her a life membership.

But Roll's experience isn't quite the same as some other female vets. In her nearly 20 years in the organization, Roll has heard the stories of women bringing their discharge papers into a Post, only to be told to go to the Ladies Auxiliary.

This is just one reason Roll decided to help form and serve as the adviser for a new Post geared toward women.

The Dorothy Kubik/Katherine Galloway Post 12097, has 41 members—all but seven, or 83%, are women.

Commander of Post 7967 in nearby Alden, Roll is the only woman in her Post and has no plans to transfer. In fact, she encourages women already in other Posts not to transfer.

"The last thing I want is to take women from other Posts," Roll said.

### No 'Pity Party'

It took more than one year of research to get the Post together. There are veterans of the wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan. There is a married couple and even a woman whose grandfather also is a member.

For now, meetings are held on Sunday afternoons and kept to one hour. Because so many members have young children, a babysitter is enlisted to watch the little ones in a room next to the meeting hall.

"We don't want our members to miss meetings because they have no options for child care," DeRouche said.

The Post has a theme of celebrating women veterans, which according to Roll, is unique.

"They don't want this to be a pity party," she said. "This is about working on women's issues, not having people feel sorry for them." ❄

E-mail [jblankenship@vfw.org](mailto:jblankenship@vfw.org)

## Post Honors First Woman to Die Overseas in WWI

While serving with Base Hospital Number 2 run by the Presbyterian Hospital Unit of New York in Etretat, France, during World War I, Amabel Scharff Roberts treated scores of wounded troops.

In her last letter home she wrote: "I don't think we can do enough for them ... these men who have left everything ... I am more thankful every day that I took up nursing, even though my bit is so very small indeed."

Not long after she wrote these words, Roberts died on Jan. 17, 1918, of blood poisoning. She became the first American nurse to die in France during the war.

A Madison, N.J., native, Roberts was later memorialized when Post 3662 was chartered with 18 members as the Amabel S. Roberts Post on Dec. 18, 1937.

The Post moved around to different New Jersey towns before going defunct in Florham Park in 1958.



# reunions & claims

REUNION COORDINATORS: *To publicize your unit's reunion, fill out the form on page 52 of the February 2011 VFW magazine or submit a form online at: [www.vfw.org/ReunionForm](http://www.vfw.org/ReunionForm). Send paper submissions to "Reunions," VFW magazine, 406 W. 34th St., Suite 523, Kansas City, MO 64111. Incomplete or illegible forms will be discarded. Submit four months in advance of reunion date. VFW members only.*

## AIR FORCE

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431st Fighter Sqdn., Tripoli, Libya: Roger Remington  
(851) 565-5366  
55th & 58th WRS: Conrad Layton (910) 446-6945,  
[conradlay@aol.com](mailto:conradlay@aol.com)  
67th Tactical Recon Wing: Holly Faux (570) 503-1648,  
[fauxhr@gmail.com](mailto:fauxhr@gmail.com)  
7486th Supply (POL) 1952-62: Terry Parnell (850) 939-8720,  
[laonpol@yahoo.com](mailto:laonpol@yahoo.com)  
AFTAC: George Thompson (707) 994-4143,  
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Air Force Public Affairs Alumni: John Terino (703) 239-2704,  
[johnterino@afpaaa.org](mailto:johnterino@afpaaa.org)  
F106 MA-1: Bob Kwicinski (734) 429-0772,  
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[bbkebler@aol.com](mailto:bbkebler@aol.com)  
Saigon Mission Assn./DAO/US Embassy: John Guffey  
(406) 799-7379, [john.guffey@netzero.net](mailto:john.guffey@netzero.net)  
Super Sabre Society: Les Frazier (512) 930-3066,  
[supersabresociety@suddenlink.net](mailto:supersabresociety@suddenlink.net)

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117th AHC, 8th Trans., Light Helicopter Co. and Detachments,  
Vietnam: Al Bennett (850) 834-3376, [namvet42@hotmail.com](mailto:namvet42@hotmail.com)  
168th Eng. Bn.: Bob Ekdahl (402) 496-0688, [rekdahl@tconl.com](mailto:rekdahl@tconl.com)  
1st Bn., 8th Cav, 1st Air Cav. Div., Vietnam: James Knafel  
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282nd AHC: John W. Bard (936) 462-8580,  
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343 General Hospital: Bernie Long (315) 651-4205,  
[tlewis28@rochester.rr.com](mailto:tlewis28@rochester.rr.com)  
3rd Bn., 8th Inf.: Edward G. Goehring (610) 967-5594,  
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42nd Medical Co. (Ambulance): Kim Ansaldo (210) 835-6145,  
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4th Bn., 39th Inf., 9th Div., 1966-67: Jim Haines  
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585th Eng. Co., Vietnam: Tom Garney (480) 982-7114,  
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591st Eng. Co., LE: Ken Kiel (414) 529-7731, [kconst@wi.rr.com](mailto:kconst@wi.rr.com)  
697th Eng. Co., Pipeline: Tom Petty (515) 981-3066,  
[tom697th@gmail.com](mailto:tom697th@gmail.com)  
70th Eng. Bn. (Combat): Roger Rock (775) 623-1029  
76th Eng. Construction Bn.: Zeke Gandara (402) 477-7230,  
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9th Inf. Div., 5th Bn., 60th Inf. Regt., C Co., Vietnam 1968-70:  
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(210) 739-2107, [guydesmo@gmail.com](mailto:guydesmo@gmail.com)  
ASA, 3rd Radio Research Unit, 509th Radio Research Grp.:  
J.R. Frankenburger (814) 643-6106, [tvchieu@yahoo.com](mailto:tvchieu@yahoo.com)

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# member benefits

## Hear What You're Missing

Hearing problems have been No. 1 on the list of health concerns shared by VFW members at past national conventions.

VA reports that among all veterans, hearing loss is the most common disability and tinnitus ranks third. More than 800,000 veterans receive disability compensation for service-connected hearing disabilities, including tinnitus.

"The problem of hearing loss is an enormous problem for the VA and for the military," Stephen Fausti, director of VA's National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research, told VFW magazine in 2008.

Even mild untreated hearing loss can get in the way of meaningful communication and social interaction.

"It affects the quality of your life in that you can't communicate with peo-

ple," said Lynn Luethke, hearing program director at the National Institute of Health. "It can cut people off and cause depression and health conditions that are more serious."

Once hearing loss occurs, the most common and effective option is hearing aids. Fortunately hearing aids in recent years have become more comfortable and cosmetically appealing, less visible than Bluetooth devices.

VFW understands the importance of hearing aids and the often-high cost, particularly for those not eligible for access through the VA health system. And it's our goal to help see to it that the medical needs of members are met.

To find out how VFW can help you get treatment for your hearing loss, call the VFW Member Benefits Department at 1-800-821-2606, option 3.

## Use VetJobs to Find Jobs, Employees

The mission of VetJobs—the VFW-sponsored website—is to assist veterans, their spouses and family members find quality jobs with employers worldwide. Since its launch on Veterans Day in 1999, VetJobs has met that goal, helping meet the recruiting needs of thousands of companies.

Please keep in mind that VetJobs is an Internet job board, not a third-party recruiting firm.

VetJobs is averaging more than 100,000 visitors a month and averages 40,000 jobs online per day, including 60-day postings.

VetJobs is partially owned by VFW. It also has been endorsed by various other veterans service organizations.

VFW's VetJobs has been recognized universally as the leading military job board on the Internet by WEDDLE's, AIRS, AOL, *Workforce Management*

*Magazine*, *InternetInc.com*, *Reader's Digest* and *BusinessWeek*.

For veterans and their family members, the VetJobs Employment Assistance Section has all the tools and guidance needed to find jobs. This

includes a career assessment test called *Career Advisor*, assistance on interviewing, writing resumés and other services. It also lists all legitimate job boards by occupation and location in the U.S.

For employers, VetJobs is a flat-fee site that has the largest reach possible into the veteran job-candidate market. Additionally, VetJobs has been effective for those employers who need candidates with security clearances.

For a decade, we have been serving the needs of job-seeking vets while fulfilling the requirements of companies.

So if you are looking for a job or you need quality employees, VFW's VetJobs is the place to go. Visit [www.vetjobs.com](http://www.vetjobs.com).



# reunions

Continued from page 53

B Trp., 2nd Sqdn., 17th Cav, 101st Abn. Div.: Larry J. Allen (630) 546-8654, 206boulevard@comcast.net  
Camp Kaiser, Korea: George Patterson (732) 539-1928, vfw2179p@aol.com  
Dak To Defenders, 299th Combat Eng.: Jay Gearhart (231) 922-3471, jaybird718@charter.net  
O'Brien Barracks, Schwabach, Germany: George Patterson (732) 539-1928, vfw2179p@aol.com  
U.S. Constabulary: Don Purrington (206) 246-3654  
Vietnam Dusters, Quads, Searchlights, Vulcans and Hawks: Paul Kopsick (202) 262-9560, ndqusa@cox.net

## ARMY AIR FORCE

60th Trp. Carrier Grp. 1950-61: Paul Baldwin (254) 694-2267, dbaldwin@hillsboro.net  
Army Air Corps Pilot Classes, WWII: Stan Yost (239) 466-1473

## MARINES

3rd Bn., 4th Marines: John MasterJohn (417) 338-4048, johnmjon@yahoo.com  
3rd Marine Div.: Don H. Gee (215) 822-9094, gygee@aol.com  
E Co., 2nd Regt., 7th Div., Vietnam: Addison Johnson (434) 585-3685, askipjohnson@hotmail.com  
FLC FLSG-A/B: Vern Snodderly (209) 537-0966, vasnodderly@comcast.net  
K Co., 3rd Bn., 7th Marine Regt., Vietnam: William Rolke (262) 780-0993, k37usmc@att.net  
Naval Air Station Sandord, 1942-68: Gerald Bohn (386) 668-4851, dlfrst@aol.com  
Truck Co., Red Beach: Gary Moore (706) 663-4491, gmoore5043@yahoo.com

## NAVY

3115 Cub 10: Ray Pulaski (410) 288-0590, rpulaski@hotmail.com  
Fleet Hospital 15: Chaplain Ted Bowers (717) 259-1047, tolobo@comcast.net  
Landing Ship Sqdn. 3: Jerry Mate (925) 829-1787, 2jms@comcast.net  
Maritime Patrol and Recon Centennial of Naval Aviation: Rob Wilkerson (904) 542-5373, vp30\_mpricona@navy.mil  
Naval Beach Grp. 1: Gene Glasco, Sr. (757) 899-2631, glascowake@yahoo.com  
Naval Nuclear Power Unit PM-3A: Bob Garland (717) 469-2075, rags\_seabee@comcast.net  
Naval Reserve Recruiters: Chet Hancock, (904) 704-1229, chetsheets@aol.com  
NMCB 128: John York (185) 372-3152  
USS Allen M. Sumner DD-692: Joe Gall (716) 692-2697, ams692@aol.com  
USS Aucilla AO-56: Tony Flynn (386) 371-1988, tyga141@aol.com  
USS Augusta CA-31: Ida Mae Forry (814) 735-4846, rimlodge@pennswoods.net

## CLAIMS

Readers are urged to help these vets seeking claim substantiation statements. Respond directly to the person listed at the end of the claim assistance request. This service is provided for VFW members who are in the process of filing a VA claim.

Please submit your claim online at [www.vfw.org/ClaimForm](http://www.vfw.org/ClaimForm) or use the form on page 52 of the February 2011 issue and send to: *VFW Magazine*, 406 W. 34th Street, Suite 523, Kansas City, MO 64111.

If you need assistance in preparing a claim, contact your local VFW Service Officer. See March 2010 *VFW* magazine, p. 44, for complete listing.

**366th Field Maintenance Sqdn., Da Nang AFB, Vietnam, Oct. 1971-Oct. 72**—Seeking anyone who worked in the environmental shop who remembers me hurting my foot and being on crutches.—Gregory Fortner, (706) 621-0522, bgfortner@windstream.net.

**Clark Air Base, Philippines, May 1968-May 1970**—Seeking proof of TDY service in Vietnam as a C-130 loadmaster to substantiate Agent Orange claim.—Kevin G. Foulouis, (843) 875-9074, kgfoulouis@hotmail.com.

**Saigon and Cholon, Vietnam TDY SEA from McCord AFB, Tacoma Wa., Jan. 9-Apr. 30, 1969**—Seeking anyone who served on this mission and trained at Lackland AFB in Dec. 1968 as instructor to teach English to Vietnamese AF Cadets to substantiate Agent Orange exposure.—Mrs. Jerry Bix, 414 Carol Drive, Piedmont, S.C. 29673, (864) 419-3083.

USS Boston, CA-69/CAG-1/SSN-703: Art Hebert (603) 672-8772, secretary@ussboston.org  
USS Boyd DD-544: Charles St. John (409) 656-5217, sailorman41@hotmail.com  
USS Caliente: Pat Hurton (530) 343-4060, gigandpai@digital.net  
USS Des Moines CA-134: Arthur Weeks, Jr. (401) 693-3131, ca134@cox.net  
USS Dyess: Joe Peters (352) 688-6573, joep2@bellsouth.net  
USS Essex CV/CVA/CVS-9, LHD-2: Gordon Kreiner (276) 889-2474, annqorkr@yahoo.com  
USS Fox: Phil Habib (843) 569-0981, habibp@bellsouth.net  
USS Gearing DD-710: Robert Witkowski (718) 824-3733, rjwemail@aol.com  
USS Hancock CV/CVA-19: Tom Boring (765) 778-4247, texamom95@aol.com  
USS Hank DD-702: Tom Woods (317) 729-5745, 1944twoods@embarq.mail.com  
USS James Madison SSBN-627: Fred Huwe (888) 890-0623  
USS James Monroe SSBN-622: Wayne Sieckowski (360) 362-2064, wsieckowski@gmail.com  
USS Klondike AD/AR-22: Virg Eggenberger (651) 345-2285, virgil@theeggenbergers.com  
USS L. Mendel Rivers SSN-686: Rodney Mckanna (843) 709-0953, chefnoid1@aol.com  
USS Lawrence DDG-4/250: Craig Bernat (814) 322-4150, dguits@uslawrence.com  
USS Litchfield County LST-901: Don Lerche (309) 928-3395, donlerche@yahoo.com  
USS LST-528: James Harbaugh (217) 253-3926, jamesharbaugh@netcare-il.com  
USS Maddox DD-731, DD-622, DD-168: Dennis Stokhaug (262) 679-9409, maddox64@aol.com  
USS Monterey CVL-26: James J. Pallace (631) 281-8456, jimpallace@yahoo.com  
USS Nassau LHA-4: Foley Hurt (484) 459-6161, fhurt@lha4.com  
USS Norfolk DL-1: Bob Godas (516) 293-4115, bobg190@verizon.net  
USS Ogden LPD-5: Ron Eford (918) 267-5129, aefurd@hotmail.com  
USS Oglethorpe AKA-100: Ron Williamson (908) 475-4435  
USS Oklahoma City: Brian Forrester (727) 215-0568, brian@hcttravel.com  
USS Park County LST-1077: George Lymgheim (503) 421-9456, lstreunion2011@gmail.com  
USS Rathburne DE/FF-1057: Bob Rowe (901) 837-6160, fs5124@wildblue.net  
USS Rock: Gary Deichler (702) 364-4994, dorado72@charter.net  
USS San Marcos LSD-25: Jack Lieberman (215) 287-4311, jacklieberman8104@comcast.net  
USS Sproston DD/DDE-577: Dan Suchy (412) 262-4802, suchy24@yahoo.com  
USS Sutter County LST-1150: Guy Simmons (978) 456-3895, guysimmons@aol.com  
USS Vulcan AR-5: Paul Stein bpvulcan@yahoo.com  
USS-29: Don Barns (850) 897-8946, catdonb@aol.com

## PROPOSED

Eng. OCS Class 33C2, 1967, Fort Belvoir, Va.: Jim Cable (515) 292-4460, jamescable@gmail.com  
USS Barry: Larry Loss (323) 284-2545, larrydd933@yahoo.com

**605th TCS, Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai AFB, July 1966**—Seeking David Trout or Peter Nothdruff to substantiate an Agent Orange-related diabetes claim.—Al Infante, (630) 292-5691, alex2245@comcast.net.

**99th SRW U-Tapao, Thailand, 1972-74**—Seeking Jan Jensen or anyone from U2CH-3 branch for proof of visits to Da Nang on DC-130s to substantiate claim of ischemic heart disease related to Agent Orange exposure.—Robert P. Gaskell, (623) 849-1066, Robert.gaskell@dcma.mil.

**Camp Ames, Korea, Oct. 1970-Nov. 1971**—Seeking anyone who served there to substantiate an Agent Orange-related cancer claim.—Donald L. Hancock, Jr., (716) 627-3114, donaldlkvw@roadrunner.com.

**USS Ticonderoga CVA-14, July 14, 1968**—Seeking anyone who served with me and remembers an unwrapping incident from a supply ship losing steering control, to substantiate personal injury accident claim.—Jerry L. Frederiksen, (515) 379-1135, nick.frederiksen@gmail.com.

**3rd Marine Div., 4th Marine Regt., H&S Bn., TAD/Special Services/Water Safety Survival Instructor, 1974-75**—Seeking anyone in that unit or duty station to substantiate exposure to herbicides and cancer claim.—Donald M. Mead, Jr., (501) 744-5915, bjackson@alfordckhart.com.

**USS Menhaden SS-377, Aug. 1956-June 1959**—Seeking anyone who remembers personnel from USS Sperry AS-12 finding highly radioactive material in a locker aboard Menhaden to substantiate kidney cancer claim.—LaVern D. MacLaird, (619) 469-1428.

**Saidor, New Guinea, March-Aug. 1944**—Seeking anyone who served with me to substantiate claim of nightly bombings, continued cleaning out pockets of Japanese jungle hideouts and "Black Sunday" April 16, 1944.—Gordon Mailloux, P.O. Box 793, Hagatna, Guam 96932, go\_guam@yahoo.com.

## 'Killer Chick' Earns Flying Cross for Heroism Over Iraq

When her A-10 Thunderbolt was hit in combat, Kim Campbell manually piloted the aircraft to Kuwait. The next day, she returned to Baghdad to rescue another pilot. **By Kelly Von Lunen**

**H**ow tough is Air Force Lt. Col. Kim Campbell? Her fighter pilot nickname, KC, stands for "Killer Chick."

During four combat tours with the 75th Exped. Fighter Sqdn., 332nd Exped. Ops. Grp., 332nd Air Exped. Wing, Campbell has flown more than 375 hours and 120 missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

At 27 years old on April 7, 2003, then-Capt. Campbell earned the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for heroism during a flight from Baghdad to Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base in Kuwait.

Piloting an A-10 Thunderbolt (also known as a Warthog), Campbell and flight leader Lt. Col. Richard Turner were on a mission targeting Iraqi tanks and vehicles being used as an enemy command post in Baghdad. Plans changed when they received word that 3rd Infantry Division troops needed help near the Tigris River.

There, enemy forces had positioned themselves within 440 yards of the advancing 3rd Division and were preventing the lead elements from crossing the North Baghdad Bridge.

According to Campbell's DFC citation: "After a quick situation update and target area study, [she] expertly employed 2.75-inch-high explosive rockets on the enemy position that had been threatening the advancing forces, scoring a direct hit and silencing the opposition."

During her recovery from the weapons delivery pass, a surface-to-air missile hit the tail of Campbell's A-10. The impact downed her hydraulics—meaning the flight controls, landing gear and brakes could not be controlled.

"I looked down at the ground and saw Baghdad down below me, where I had just been firing at enemy forces,"



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO

Then Capt. Kim Campbell inspects the anti-aircraft fire her A-10 sustained during a mission over Baghdad in April 2003. She was able to pilot the plane and return to base safely.

she told Stephens Media, "and thought that this would be really bad if I had to eject there."

After attempting emergency procedures to no avail, Campbell isolated the hydraulic systems, placed the A-10 into manual reversion flight control mode, and headed back to Kuwait. The catch? Of the three times the maneuver had been attempted during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, only one succeeded.

However, Campbell returned safely and executed a near-perfect landing. "Campbell's aviation prowess and coolness under pressure directly contributed to the successful completion of the critical mission and recovery of a valuable combat aircraft," her citation reads.

The next day, she returned to Baghdad in a different A-10 to search for a pilot

**Name:** Lt. Col. Kim N. Campbell

**Unit:** 75th Exped. Fighter Sqdn.,  
332nd Exped. Ops. Grp.,  
332nd Air Exped. Wing

**Award:** Distinguished Flying Cross

**Married:** Yes (her husband also is an A-10 pilot)

who had been shot down near where her jet had been hit. Soldiers rescued and recovered the other pilot on the ground.

"It completely reinforced the importance of taking care of guys on the ground," she told Stephens Media. "When they need our help, we're gonna be there, even in these high-threat situations."

Campbell joins an esteemed group of female pilots who have received the DFC for valor in a war zone:

- In 2003, Maj. Melissa May, an F-16 fighter pilot, earned the DFC for her fourth combat mission over Baghdad. She completed her mission despite enemy fire and low visibility.
- Chief Warrant Officer 3 Lori Hill was piloting her Kiowa Warrior helicopter in Iraq in March 2006 when insurgents began firing at her and another helicopter, targeting the lead aircraft. Hill maneuvered her helicopter to draw fire away while providing suppressive fire for troops on the ground.

As of September 2010, women made up 19.2% of the Air Force. There are 677 (4.5%) female pilots, 282 (6.4%) female navigators and 182 air battle managers (command and control, 12.3%).

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**Editor's Note:** Exact records for the Distinguished Flying Cross are not kept. Please notify us of any additional female pilots who have earned the DFC for valor.