

MILITARY RESISTANCE GUARD ISSUE: **[10F3]**

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**Soldiers Had Their PTSD
Diagnoses Reversed “Because Of
The Costs Of Caring For Them”
“I Find That I Can No Longer Work In
A System That Requires Me To
Sacrifice My Professional And Moral
Principles To Political Expediency”**

“The Army Clearly Realizes They Have A Nationwide, Systematic Problem On Their Hands”

May 16 By Steve Vogel, Washington Post Company [Excerpts]

The Army launched a review Wednesday of its handling of post-traumatic stress disorder and other behavioral health evaluations at all of its medical facilities since 2001, in response to fears that some soldiers had their diagnoses reversed because of the costs of caring for them.

The review, ordered by Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh and Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno, follows disclosures that some soldiers found to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder had that diagnosis rejected during subsequent evaluations at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state.

In reviewing those evaluations this year, Army investigators have found cases in which “the original PTSD diagnoses were more accurate,” according to an Army statement.

The Army will review diagnoses and evaluations made at all of its medical facilities.

Army leaders also have ordered an independent review by the service’s inspector general into whether the disability evaluation system affects the behavioral health diagnoses given to soldiers and whether the command climate or other non-medical factors affect the diagnoses, according to information given Wednesday to members of Congress.

The diagnoses are the first step in evaluating the amount of disability benefits a soldier receives.

In addition, the Army auditor general has been ordered to audit the Army Medical Command Ombudsman Program, which was set up to mediate for soldiers and family members in the wake of the scandal over conditions at the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

“The Army clearly realizes they have a nationwide, systematic problem on their hands,” said Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), chairman of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, who requested the review at Lewis-McChord.

The Army’s review of 400 cases at Lewis-McChord has led to more than 100 service members having their PTSD diagnoses restored.

The controversy stems from the work of a special forensic psychiatric team that in 2007 began evaluating mental health diagnoses of service members preparing to leave the military.

The screening team reversed at least 290 PTSD diagnoses made by the military or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Service members with such diagnoses are entitled to a 50 percent disability rating, a level at which the military is responsible for considerable medical benefits after retirement.

The Army is investigating whether the Lewis-McChord team used the cost of a PTSD diagnosis as a consideration in their evaluations, according to Murray's office.

Three officers have been placed on leave while the investigation continues, including Col. Dallas Homas, the hospital commander, and William Keppler, the head of the psychiatry team.

A PowerPoint presentation that Keppler gave to staff members emphasized that every diagnosis of PTSD costs the military \$1.5 million in health benefits and pension payments.

Juliana Ellis-Billingsley, a member of the screening team, resigned in February. "I find that I can no longer work in a system that requires me to sacrifice my professional and moral principles to political expediency," Ellis-Billingsley wrote in her resignation letter.

Army leaders had told Murray that the problem was isolated, but the decision to order a nationwide review indicates otherwise, the senator said.

"The Army clearly realizes they have a nationwide, systematic problem on their hands,"

“Ill Or Injured Service Members Now Wait An Average Of 394 Days To Move Through The Military’s Disability Evaluation Process”

“At Some Installations, The Average Wait Is Nearly 18 Months Or Longer”

May 23, 2012 By Patricia Kime - Staff writer, Army Times & By Steve Vogel, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

Ill or injured service members now wait an average of 394 days to move through the military's disability evaluation process, an increase of more than 10 percent since 2010 and well off the goal of 295 days, according to the Government Accountability Office.

Active duty troops waited 394 days on average in fiscal year 2011, while members of the National Guard and Reserve faced waits of 420 days.

In 2010, the wait times were 357 and 370 days, respectively, and in 2008, they were less than 300.

In fiscal 2011, just 19 percent of active-duty service members and 18 percent of National Guard and Reserve members completed the Integrated Disability Evaluation System, or IDES, process within the goal of 295 days for active-duty members and 305 days for Guard and Reserve personnel.

And at some installations, the average wait is nearly 18 months or longer. At Fort Belvoir, Va., for example, soldiers face an average processing period of 537 days, while guardsmen at Fort Carson, Colo., wait 651 days.

IDES was introduced in 2007 to streamline the disability evaluation process and integrate the Defense and Veterans Affairs department systems.

Before IDES, service members waited an average of 450 days to get through both the required Defense Department medical exams and the separate VA process to evaluate service members for benefits to which they may be entitled.

In fiscal 2008, with IDES operational at a fraction of the 139 total military treatment facilities, average wait time was 297 days. But that figure has steady ticked upward since the new system went force-wide.

“Unfortunately, this new disability system is exhibiting some of the same failings of the broken system that it was designed to replace,” said the committee’s chairman, Sen. Patty Murray, (D-Wash.)

“Our servicemembers should never be forced to wait nearly 400 days to get a decision that will have such an important impact on their future.”

Murray said six service members in her home state of Washington have died of suicide, car crashes or accidental drug overdoses while wading through the IDES process.

**“The American Public Is Losing
Patience — As Are Troops”
“To A Nation Weary Of War And Troops
Worn Down By More Than A Decade Of
Sacrifice, It Looks As Though The
President Kicked The Can Down The
Rocky Afghan Road”**

May 14, 2012 Army Times Editorial [Excerpts]

A key component of President Obama's "strategic partnership" with Afghan leader Hamid Karzai is an agreement to keep thousands of U.S. troops in Afghanistan for another 12 years, through 2024.

The president's announcement May 2, revealed during an hours-long surprise visit to Bagram Airfield, was short on detail.

He said nothing about the number of U.S. troops needed, and offered no specifics on what they would do beyond "two narrow security missions," counterterrorism and training.

There was no mention of participation by coalition forces and no explanation of how 2024 became the magic end date.

To a nation weary of war and troops worn down by more than a decade of sacrifice, it looks as though the president kicked the can down the rocky Afghan road.

Key concerns for troops:

The mission. What defines "success" in Afghanistan has never been clear, and that hasn't changed.

If we don't know what we need to achieve, how will we know when we're finished?

Coalition buy-in. America's NATO allies are under enormous domestic pressure to withdraw forces from Afghanistan and are, in the end, doing so.

The U.S. could end up going it alone.

Clearly, Obama has every incentive to get the mission accomplished in Afghanistan with honor and as quickly as practical.

Everyone does.

But he is working against a tide in which his NATO partners are pulling out as fast as they can, the American public is losing patience — as are troops — and the Afghan government, shaky though it may be, is in need of reassurance that America will still have its back come 2014.

Army Expands Use Of Early Discharge Authority Of Regular Army Enlisted Members:

“The Defense Department Begins Downsizing The Army”

“Congress Recently Amended Legislation That Expands The Services’ Authority To Separate Regular Army Enlisted Members From Three Months To One Year Prior To Their Scheduled Date Of Separation”

May 26, 2012 By Susy Raybon, Military Community Examiner [Excerpts]

The Pentagon released information yesterday that will impact hundreds of soldiers as the Defense Department begins downsizing the Army.

“Congress recently amended legislation that expands the services’ authority to separate Regular Army enlisted members from three months to one year prior to their scheduled date of separation, referred to as Expiration Term of Service (ETS).”

The Army plans to begin using this authority in the next few days in a very targeted manner to address readiness by stabilizing enlisted soldiers at least six months prior to deployment.

The Army states this ruling is directed towards a small percentage of soldiers in deploying units who remain in the unit’s rear detachment due to insufficient time remaining before ETS to complete the deployment.

“The Army will not immediately increase the period of early separation to one year, rather it will implement this change in a phased manner based on scheduled unit deployment dates.”

Soldiers assigned to deploying units whose scheduled separation date precludes them from deploying with their unit will be given the opportunity to reenlist or extend.

Additionally, soldiers with more than three years of active service, but less than six years of service (in total) who elect not to reenlist (or extend) will be subject to involuntary early separation.

Commanders have the authority to retain a soldier for operational necessity and the discretion to retain a soldier for compassionate reasons. Army Human Resources Command and Army G-1 will send commanders and soldiers implementation guidance.

**“NATO Members ‘Are Chafing
At The Bit To Get Out’ Of
Afghanistan”**
**“American Support For The
Mission Has Fallen To 27%”**
**“The Inauguration Of A French
President Committed To An Early
Drawdown Has Instead Intensified A
Rush For The Exits From An
Unpopular War”**
**“The Mixed Messages Around The Globe
Had Stirred ‘Deep Mutual Suspicions’ In
The Alliance”**

May 16, 2012 By Paul Richter, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — Just days before a NATO summit that leaders had hoped would present a carefully scripted display of unity on Afghanistan, the inauguration of a French president committed to an early drawdown has instead intensified a rush for the exits from an unpopular war.

In advance of this weekend’s summit in Chicago, the Obama administration and senior North Atlantic Treaty Organization officials have been scrambling to ensure that alliance members remain committed to keeping troops in Afghanistan until the end of 2014, and to paying billions of dollars after that to prop up the Afghan government.

But that unanimity is in doubt with the arrival of French President Francois Hollande, the Socialist Party leader who campaigned on a vow to withdraw all 3,300 French troops by the end of this year.

Hollande’s victory sent a shock wave through NATO and sparked a highly unusual diplomatic campaign by the U.S. and other governments to persuade Hollande to reconsider his pledge.

NATO members “are chafing at the bit to get out” of Afghanistan, Charles Kupchan, a specialist on NATO and former Clinton administration official, told the same Senate committee hearing.

Australia, which is not a member of NATO, will start to withdraw its 1,550 troops this year, and most will be out by the end of 2013, Prime Minister Julia Gillard said last month.

Political rivals said her goal was to allow her party to declare the Afghan mission mostly over before elections next year.

American support for the mission has fallen to 27%, according to an Associated Press-GFK poll this month. Even among Republicans, support has fallen to 37% from 58% last year, the poll found.

Jorge Benitez, a NATO analyst for the Atlantic Council of the United States, said moves by the Dutch, Canadians, Australians and even the Americans “have really pulled the cork out of the bottle. It could be that more countries will now say, ‘We have the leeway to go early.’”

A senior Western diplomat, who asked to remain anonymous in discussing a sensitive subject, acknowledged that the French election and the mixed messages around the globe had stirred “deep mutual suspicions” in the alliance.

“People are watching over their shoulders,” he said.

**“I Am Repulsed By Some Of
The New Regulations That Are
Being Put Into Place”**

**“My Husband Has Tattoos Visible
On His Hands And On His Neck”**

**“He’s Fought Two Tours In
Afghanistan And Watched His
Friends Die In Front Of Him”**

“Because He Has These Tattoos, You’re Going To Kick My Husband Out Of His Career?”

I cannot begin to comprehend why it is OK to go die and fight for your country with these tattoos but not OK to be seen within the country you just fought for and watched your friends die for with these same tattoos.

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
June 4, 2012

I am repulsed by some of the new regulations that are being put into place.

I understand the normal regulations with hair and appearance and such.

But what I do not understand is how you can tell someone on their leave, on their weekends or vacations with their families, that they have to be clean-shaven 24/7.

Yes, that’s what every soldier wants to do is leave the desert after months of fighting to come home on rest and recuperation and worry about the hair on his face every single morning when (he) only wants to hold (his) spouse or children possibly.

I can promise you that the captains, sergeants and anyone else who gives these regs a big “Hoo-ah” are going to find themselves too busy one weekend to shave and be a hypocrite to everything they are saying should be changed.

The other thing is the tattoos.

I cannot begin to comprehend why it is OK to go die and fight for your country with these tattoos but not OK to be seen within the country you just fought for and watched your friends die for with these same tattoos.

My husband has tattoos visible on his hands and on his neck.

He’s fought two tours in Afghanistan and watched his friends die in front of him.

He has been in the Army infantry with the MOS of 11 Bravo since he was 17. Because he has these tattoos, you’re going to kick my husband out of his career?

Why be so judgmental against soldiers with tattoos who have already been in and given their lives to you?

Brittany Pernell
Fort Richardson, Alaska

Off-Duty Dress Rules: The Army “Wants To Tell Me That How I Dress And Whether Or Not I Shave Off Duty Should Somehow Be Punishable Under The Uniform Code Of Military Justice”

Army Times
FORUMS
April 23, 2012

Amazing the same Army that debated for years whether gays should be allowed to serve because “what they do in their off-duty time, as long as it is not illegal, should have no basis on their ability to be a soldier” now wants to tell me that how I dress and whether or not I shave off duty should somehow be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (“Upcoming changes to AR 670-1,” Forums, April 8).

This reminds me of sergeants major who, when mortars were landing in the middle of the night in Iraq, were the ones out there yelling at troops for running to their bunkers or fighting positions without having first grabbed and put on their reflective belts.

— RONALD45

MORE:

**“Trying To Tell Us The Changes Are
For The Purpose Of Promoting
Discipline Is A Sign Of Just How Far
Removed From The Line Units You
Really Are”**

**“I Damn Sure Never Learned It From
Being Annoyed About Some Idiotic Rule
That Someone Who Commands A Desk
Came Up With”**

Army Times
Letters To The Editor
April 30, 2012

Change is inevitable. Good or bad soldiers must learn to be flexible.

Reading a line from the last article regarding the new changes, however, has left me rather disgusted.

“The new rules are neither a part of the drawdown nor a tool of attrition,” according to Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond Chandler. That is, in my opinion, indicative of how blind he apparently thinks we are (“Tougher grooming regs,” April 16).

You gain the respect of your soldiers by being honest about your agenda upfront. To try and pass off your regulation changes as anything less than a tool to thin the ranks is disrespectful to everyone it applies to.

Furthermore, trying to tell us the changes are for the purpose of promoting discipline is a sign of just how far removed from the line units you really are.

We all know discipline is not learned by making threats, nor is it learned by ridiculous measures to which you govern our lives.

It is learned through mentorship, experience and a desire to be good at what you do, most of all staying alive outside the wire.

You definitely learn it through countless combat missions.

I damn sure never learned it from being annoyed about some idiotic rule that someone who commands a desk came up with.

Changes will occur, regardless of all our complaining, but don't lie to us about the underlying purpose, to sugarcoat an Army that finds itself in the face of many cutbacks.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jeremiah Harrington
Fort Hood, Texas

**“I Guess The Only Photos We Will
Now Have Of This (Afghanistan) War
Are Those That The Military
Propaganda Machine Wants You To
See”**

“(The General’s) Actions Speak Of Censorship Of The Highest Order”

Army Times
FORUMS
June 4, 2012

I guess the only photos we will now have of this (Afghanistan) war are those that the military propagand machine wants you to see, and those that the press are allowed to publish, each decidedly with its own agenda, both of which are on opposite extremes (“Marine general bans soldiers in Afghanistan from taking photos outside the wire,” Forums, May 20).

Way to go, military.

I guess we will get the neat little sanitized version of your wars, where everything is going swell and we are meeting all objectives.

(The general’s) actions speak of censorship of the highest order.

Since the Civil War and invention of the camera, soldiers have taken photos staged and otherwise, just like the military and press, of their experiences.

— RONALD45





“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication.

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?



U.S. soldier in Bejjia village Iraq, Feb. 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the email address if you wish and we'll send it regularly with your best wishes. Whether in Afghanistan or at a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657.

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