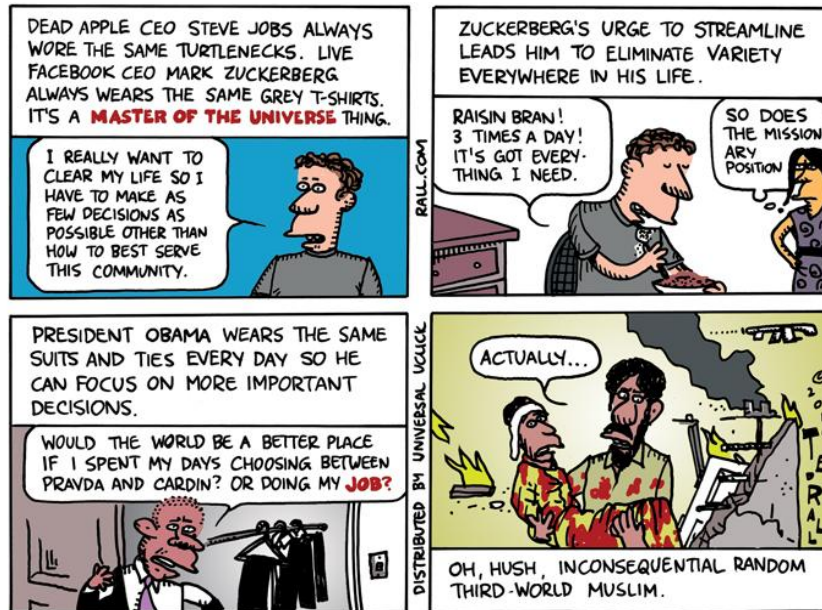


Military Resistance 12K9



How The Army Denies Justice To Veterans:

“An Obscure Army Panel Is Supposed To Correct Errors Or Remove Injustices. Many Believe It’s Rigged”

“They Routinely Ignore The Evidence, The Medicine, The Rules And The Law To Deny Benefits To Veterans”

“The Boards Have Come To Function With Impunity, Without Fearing That They’ll Have To Defend Their Work”

Thanks to Anne Whitworth, who sent this in. She writes: “Thought this article might be of interest. This appears to be collusion between the Army (and probably Navy and Air Force too if you look further into it) and the VA.

“The DOD branches agree to libel, slander and defame discharging service-members with weaponized discharge statuses precisely to save the VA money so the VA then agrees not to come to DOD for more direct funding.”

By: Alissa Figueroa, Fusion Media Network, LLC. Executive Producer, Investigations: Keith Summa [Excerpts]

An obscure Army panel is supposed to correct errors or remove injustices. Many believe it's rigged.

After almost a decade in the Army reserves, Chuck Luther was deployed to Iraq in 2006.

It was hell. An IED killed four men in his unit, including his best friend. A mortar blast left him partially deaf with splitting headaches. Luther started to unravel.

What happened next would start a five year battle with the Army.

Luther was diagnosed with PTSD. Then the diagnosis was changed to a “Personality Disorder.”

He was quickly booted out of the military with no benefits.

Luther appealed the discharge.

But then came the ultimate injustice: he discovered the one place in the Army he could go for help would leave him, and thousands like him, defeated.

The Board for Correction of Military Records (BCMR) is the last place in the Army you can go to change your record, including overturning a discharge that left you without medical benefits for service-related injuries. Its stated mission is to “correct errors” or “remove injustices.”

Rarely does it do the latter, say vets and lawyers.

A Fusion investigation has found a system shrouded in secrecy that hardly ever overturns a discharge like Chuck Luther's.









We analyzed thousands of Board decisions, reviewed hundreds of internal documents, and conducted nearly 50 interviews.

We found that when service members file appeals that could lay significant blame on the Army or cost a lot of money, the default answer is often no.

In fact, the system is so impenetrable, and the results so often negative, that few veterans attempt an appeal when they want a meaningful change.

“Each case has its own outrage,” said Michael Wishnie, professor and deputy dean at Yale Law School.

“They Routinely Ignore The Evidence, The Medicine, The Rules And The Law To Deny Benefits To Veterans”

Administrative Discharge		Medical Discharge
	HEALTHCARE BENEFITS	
	RETIREMENT PAYMENTS	
	9/11 EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS	
	SEVERANCE PAY	

“They routinely ignore the evidence, the medicine, the rules and the law to deny benefits to veterans.”

“If you need to change a date on your record, add a medal, then yes, maybe you’ll get relief,” said Raymond Toney, a military law attorney who’s researched the Boards.

“But when it comes to sexual harassment, reprisal for whistleblowers, things like that, forget about it.”

That’s exactly what we found.

The Army Board says it grants relief in about 41% of cases it reviews. We analyzed publicly available decisions for people appealing three common discharges that leave veterans without benefits. Between 2001 and 2012, we found that about 5 percent of veterans were able to change the reason for their discharge.

But only about 2 percent were granted a medical evaluation that could result in a medical discharge and additional benefits.

Not one was granted a medical discharge outright by the Board.

In the case of Personality Disorder, veterans are denied medical benefits from the military because it's considered pre-existing, not service-connected. In 2007 Congress held hearings on the issue.

The following year, the Government Accountability Office found that Personality Disorder discharges were being given in violation of military policy.

Sarah Bercaw, the Director of the Army BCMR, said the Board does not track what kinds of cases it grants and denies.

She said that a "low number" of veterans appealed Personality Disorder discharges after the Congressional inquiry.

"The reality is many choose not to (apply)," said Bercaw.

But veterans, lawyers and advocates told us the same thing over and over: people don't apply because it's a daunting undertaking, and they don't think they have a chance.

It can take months just to request one's full military records, and years to see a case through completion. Few service members know the intricacies of military law well enough to make a solid argument, and hardly any can afford a lawyer.

"It's very common knowledge in the veteran community how hard this is, so they don't even try," said Geoff Millard, an Iraq war veteran and Policy Associate at Swords to Plowshares.

That's despite how much a veteran could gain if he or she were granted a medical discharge, for instance, like Chuck Luther sought.

Benefits are only part of it. Employers may be reluctant to hire people with a Personality Disorder.

Chuck Luther says he couldn't get a well-paid private security job after leaving the Army because of the label. He was left broke and filed for bankruptcy.

Liz Luras was kicked out of the Army with a Personality Disorder after being raped, reporting it, and suffering months of retaliation.

Despite the fact that she had medical proof of the assault, and even testified before Congress about the reprisal, Luras hasn't applied to the BCMR.

"Even people presenting strong cases, they lose. You go through so much to get there, and then to have it fall apart, that can be really devastating," said Luras.

“You Just Never Know – When Does The Retaliation End And There’s Just Justice?”

“You just never know – when does the retaliation end and there’s just justice?”

Chuck Luther’s case looks cut and dry.

He had 12 years of successful military service. He’d earned three Army Achievement Medals and a Combat Action Badge. He was discharged honorably once, was able to re-enlist, and, says Luther, passed eight psychological screenings in the process.

He started having problems, and only sought medical help, after going to combat.

Luther was diagnosed with PTSD three times before being discharged from the military. A few months later, doctors at the Department of Veterans Affairs - the VA - diagnosed him with service-connected PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury.

But the two PTSD diagnoses that came from military doctors had been changed; one within days, one within hours, and Personality Disorder is the diagnosis that stuck.

Luther spent a year collecting the records and evidence for his application. Then he sent it in and waited.

He was denied. And then denied again on appeal.

In responding to his appeal, the board concluded there was no proof that Chuck Luther had PTSD prior to discharge, or that it was because of PTSD that he was unfit to serve.

Luther had an independent psychologist review his medical records who determined he likely suffered from PTSD. The Board discounted the review since the psychologist did not examine Luther personally. That’s despite the fact that the BCMR regularly denies applicants based on its own doctors’ reviews of medical records, rather than personal exams.

“It’s just outrageous,” said Todd Holbrook, the attorney that took on Chuck Luther’s case pro-bono.

“It seemed to me like they were bending over backwards to protect the army and justify its initial decision.”

Chuck Luther’s experience with the Board isn’t unique.

There's the female soldier who was raped repeatedly by a fellow soldier, was diagnosed with PTSD by a military doctor, had a history of head trauma and sexual assault, and was kicked out a month later for a pre-existing “condition, not disability.”

The West Point cadet who was disenrolled a month before graduation because he failed fitness tests, leaving him with no degree and owing \$136,000, even though regulation

said the Army could only recoup tuition when cadets left voluntarily or because of misconduct.

The Colonel who was denied a promotion to Brigadier General (a rank so senior it must be approved by the President and the Senate), for misconduct that never happened.

While documents in his application showed “he did not actually engage in misconduct ... they do not change the appearance of impropriety,” reasoned the Board.

All of these service members’ applications for relief were denied.

“This is the last chance for these service members to have their records corrected, and when we look through these cases we see these incredible errors that are so blatant,” said Tom Moore, a former active duty JAG Corps member who now trains pro-bono lawyers with the National Veterans Legal Services Program.

“Errors are not getting caught. The system is not designed to fix these problems.”

The Army Board for Correction of Military Records is made up of a rotating panel of three senior-level civilian employees of the Army. About 9,000 cases a year are reviewed by BCMR board members. Several thousand more cases are handled by the civilian staff of 43 people, and never reach board members.

“Board members are chosen because they’re well respected, they’re probably highly competent, many of them have served in the military,” said Moore. “They’re well meaning, they’re capable of making good decisions, but the system does not allow them to do that.”

Board members meet twice a week and begin deliberations at 8am and finish around 1pm, deciding about 80 cases, according to internal documents obtained by Fusion. On average that’s three minutes and 45 seconds per case, even though some of these applications, like Luther’s, are hundreds of pages long.

But Board members aren’t required to read applications cover to cover. They’re presented with a summary of the case and a decision recommended by an analyst who works for the BCMR.

Sarah Bercaw, the BCMR Director, said Board members can request extra time to deliberate on difficult cases, and do. She added that many of the cases decided during a session involve simple administrative changes like spelling errors that require no discussion, leaving more time for complex ones. But she also said, that ultimately, there is a time crunch.

“We have to have 90% of the cases complete in 10 months, and 100% complete in 18 months and we meet that timeline,” said Bercaw. “But the research and analysis that goes into (the draft decisions) before the board meets is very extensive and very time consuming.”

One former Board member who served for ten years, told us he signed off on analysts' decisions more than 95 percent of the time. He requested anonymity because he did not want to compromise relationships with former colleagues.

"The analysts would say, 'our recommendation is this,'" said the former member.

He trusted the decisions they reached, especially in complex cases like Chuck Luther's, which require knowledge of a complicated set of army regulations and medical diagnoses.

"There was a medical doctor on the staff there. He'd been there for a long time, he was very experienced. He weighed in on those," said the former member.

Service members and their lawyers don't agree that analysts and the one doctor on the Board's staff are qualified to make recommendations without significant oversight.

"When I see the decisions written by analysts, they clearly don't understand the army regulations," said Tom Moore. "For the board to really work, we have to force the board members to consider the facts, all the pertinent records."

Lawyers say analysts' case summaries regularly omit evidence brought by applicants.

Doctors providing expert opinions are not required to have a mental health background – in one case we analyzed, a Personality Disorder discharge was upheld by a general practitioner, not a psychologist.

And while it is technically possible to appear before the Board, it's not easy.

The former Board member who spoke with us had never met a service member whose case he helped decide. He deliberated on an estimated 10,800 applications over the ten years he served.

There was one personal appearance granted by the Army BCMR in 2012, 2010 and 2009 combined, the only years for which we were able to gather data. Bercaw confirmed there hadn't been one in the last year either, adding that either Board members or the director can grant a hearing if they deem it necessary.

In the four years that only one personal appearance was granted, the Board handled an estimated 36,000 cases.

Personality Disorder is a good litmus test for the BCMR because it's one place the military has made mistakes.

A 2008 report by the Government Accountability Office reviewed Personality Disorder discharges for 371 veterans across service branches and found that, among other things, almost a third of the soldiers discharged from the Army with a Personality Disorder were never diagnosed by a psychiatrist or PhD-level psychologist -- a requirement by military policy.

“The Boards Have Come To Function With Impunity, Without Fearing That They’ll Have To Defend Their Work.”

That year the Department of Defense did their own review of the Personality Disorder discharges and found none were done improperly. However, the Pentagon added extra layers of oversight and they decreased dramatically.

Yet, there have been no mass reversals for those who received Personality Disorder discharges prior to the change: the Pentagon referred veterans who believed they were discharged improperly to the BCMR.

But while 6,709 soldiers were discharged from the Army with Personality Disorders between 2001 and 2007, we found only 231 Army veterans appealed those discharges to the Board through 2012.

And of those, only one applicant was sent to be evaluated for a medical discharge.

Chuck Luther, now 43, became a voice for many when he testified before Congress in 2010 about his experience.

He says now that despite the publicity, he wasn’t surprised by the decision of the Board for Correction of Military Records in his case.

Veterans’ lawyers say that a practical lack of oversight is a big part of the problem. You can challenge a BCMR decision in federal court, but attorneys estimate that happens about 1 percent of the time (the Army was not able to confirm that information). Lawyer fees range from \$5,000 to \$15,000, so most service members can’t afford one.

“In the last 30 years there’s been almost no judicial review of these cases,” said Michael Wishnie, professor at Yale Law School.

“The boards have come to function with impunity, without fearing that they’ll have to defend their work.”

The result, said Wishnie, are decisions that “if my students turned something like that in to me, I would fail them.”

Congress has ultimate say over the Board. The last time Fusion found it ordered a comprehensive review of the BCMRs was in 1996.

The Senate Armed Services Committee was “concerned about the perception among service members that the boards have become lethargic and unresponsive, and have abdicated their independence to the uniformed service staffs.”

The subsequent Department of Defense report stated that there wasn’t evidence of military commanders influencing Board members directly, but the Army’s procedure of having analysts write full draft decisions, “raises an appearance that panel members merely act as a ‘rubber stamp.’”

That same process remains in place nearly 20 years later.

Spurred by veterans' complaints about the Board some members of Congress have recently begun looking into its inner workings. A bill co-sponsored by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand would require a psychologist or psychiatrist to advise the BCMR on cases that involve mental health issues.

Seven years after being forced out of the military, Chuck Luther has given up trying to change his discharge. He was able to get medical coverage through the VA after a year-long application process, but the benefits are significantly limited compared to what he'd have gotten from the Army with a medical discharge.

Today he runs a smoothie shop in a strip mall off a flat, dusty road in Killeen, Texas.

Customers get hints of his military background. His hair is cropped short; his frame is sturdy and muscular. His arms are covered with tattoos. One reads "Disposable Warriors" in block letters. The other is scrawled with a quote from Plato: "Only the dead have seen the end of war."

While Chuck Luther will never wear an Army uniform again, he's surrounded himself with people who do — he works with soldiers at Fort Hood through a program administered by Texas A&M University.

He mediates between soldiers and their chain of command to diffuse difficult situations before they end in a bad discharge.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed In Kunduz

November 15, 2014 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No: NR-572-14

Sgt. 1st Class Michael A. Cathcart, 31, of Bay City, Michigan, died Nov. 14, in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan, of wounds received from small arms fire while on dismounted combat operations.

He was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Three Georgian Soldiers In Afghanistan Wounded By Bagram Bomb

15 November 2014 By Nana Kirtzkhalia, Trend

Three Georgian soldiers serving in a peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan were injured in a bomb attack.

Georgia's Ministry of Defence released a statement Nov.15 that said three members of the Georgian Armed Forces were patrolling the Bagram Air Base territory when a bomber blew himself up.

The wounded were placed in Bagram hospital and their lives are now out of danger.

Since the beginning of participation in the mission in Afghanistan, 29 people of the Georgian military lost their lives and 435 people were injured.

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

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

Resistance Action: Senior ANA Officer Critically Wounded By Attack In Kabul



[Graphic: flickr.com/photos]

Nov 15 2014 By Khaama Press

A senior Afghan National Army (ANA) officer was critically injured by an attack in capital Kabul early on Saturday.

According to defense officials, the attack was carried out in Chelsiton area of Kabul city around 8:00 am local time.

The officials further added that the injured ANA officer was shifted to Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan hospital.

In the meantime, a security official said Gen. Asif, head of the sports department in the Ministry of Defense was attacked while he was on his way towards his office.

Nov 16 2014 By Khaama Press & Nov 15, 2014 Outlook India

At least two Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers were martyred following roadside bomb explosion, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) said.

A statement released by MoD said the two Afghan soldiers lost their lives in the past 24 hours.

No further details were given regarding the exact location of the incident by the Ministry of Defense.

According to defense officials, the Afghan army deaths stands at 4 service members daily on average which are mainly caused due to improvised explosive device (IED) attacks.

Two Afghan security officials were killed today when militants attacked a border post on the Pak-Afghan border in Pakistan's restive northwest tribal region.

MILITARY NEWS

**Obamas' Syria Bombings
Building Sympathy For ISIS:
"No Gratitude Toward The United
States. Many People Are Angry At
The Americans"**

**"People Have Started To Regard The
Airstrikes Suspiciously, Or They
Sympathize With ISIS"**

“People Don’t Want Some Outside Power To Attack”

November 13, 2014 by KAREEM FAHIMNOV, New York Times [Excerpts]

SANLIURFA, Turkey — American airstrikes on the Syrian city of Raqqa, the vaunted capital of the Islamic State’s self-proclaimed caliphate, have scattered its fighters and disrupted the harsh system they had imposed, residents and visitors there say.

But they see no gratitude toward the United States.

Rather, they suggested in interviews, many people are angry at the Americans.

Food and fuel prices in Raqqa have soared, power blackouts have prevailed, and order is now threatened by a vacuum of any authority.

For all their violence and intolerance toward disbelievers, the fighters of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, at least functioned as a government, providing basic services and some semblance of stability.

“People don’t want some outside power to attack,” Khalid Farhan, a Raqqa resident, said during a recent trip to Turkey.

The anger in Raqqa underscored the potentially destabilizing consequences of the United States-led military campaign, in a place where there was little desire to see the Syrian government or other rebel groups return to power.

The campaign also risks further alienating Syrians in opposition areas in the north who were already angered by the Obama administration’s narrow focus on destroying the Islamic State and refusal to counter attacks by the Syrian military.

It was not that the militants were popular in Raqqa, according to nearly a dozen residents, who spoke in interviews in the city or across the border in Turkey.

Rather, the Islamic State had become an indispensable service provider.

Some people in Raqqa said they had seen a benefit from the American aerial assaults, which seemed to have halted the indiscriminate bombings by the Syrian Air Force. But for the most part, the American strikes had shaken “a sense of calm,” especially among conservative Sunni Muslims in northern Syria, who, despite their unease with the militants, had adapted, said Hassan Hassan, an analyst of Syria based in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates.

The rule of the Islamic State militants in Raqqa contrasted sharply with the chaos that had existed before, when there was “infighting between rebels, or shootings, or warlords controlling oil fields,” Mr. Hassan said.

After the Islamic State exerted its control, residents spoke more frequently about receiving their “rights,” he said.

“People say ISIS is the first group that is able to take complaints seriously” — for instance, arbitrating old property or financial disputes, Mr. Hassan said.

The group also won favor by occasionally punishing its own members, and even leaders, who had been accused of abuses, Mr. Hassan and residents said.

As a result, “People have started to regard the airstrikes suspiciously, or they sympathize with ISIS,” Mr. Hassan said.

Reflecting how civilian life in the area has become intertwined with the militants — who paid salaries, ran schools and directed traffic — 10 civilians were killed in a coalition airstrike on Sunday that hit one of the oil facilities run by the Islamic State, where many people had found work.

Other municipal workers, fearful of the airstrikes, had stopped coming to work.

At the electricity company run by the Islamic State in Raqqa, engineers were staying home, according to a 35-year-old employee who only gave his first name, Mohammed. The company’s cars could not move safely between provinces, to maintain dams, electricity cables or repair transformers, he said.

“The Americans are destroying our infrastructure,” he said. “It is hard for the Islamic State to supply, fix and maintain the electricity networks in Raqqa province while the American warplanes and rockets attack any position, anytime,” he said.

Electricity was available for only six hours on some days, and the price of cooking gas had tripled, said Yasser Awad, 40, a house painter. He said that he wanted to move his family out of Syria, but could not afford to.

“We just want someone who will bring justice, stability and safety,” Mr. Awad said. “God knows who that is.”

Navy Investigation Details Why San Diego Commanding Officer Removed From Post: Warship Boxer Skipper Practiced Hands-On Contact With Female Crew;

“Brown Also Screamed And Cursed At His Officers And Senior Sailors To The Point Of Abuse And Bullying”

Nov. 12, 2014 By Jeanette Steele, The San Diego Union-Tribune [Excerpts]

It appears that Capt. Wayne R. Brown, one-time skipper of the San Diego warship Boxer, didn't know how to talk to people in his command – especially women.

He tried to advise female crew members about birth control and how to deal with their husbands and boyfriends, and occasionally put his hand on a woman's waist or hip as he passed.

Brown also screamed and cursed at his officers and senior sailors to the point of abuse and bullying, according to a Navy investigation into the Boxer skipper's behavior.

The investigation – obtained by U-T San Diego through a Freedom of Information Act request – reveals why Navy brass removed Brown from his post Sept. 29 citing “equal opportunity” concerns.

At an Oct. 6 administrative hearing, the Navy found Brown guilty of failure to obey an order. That's for sexual harassment of one Boxer female that was substantiated by the investigation, which also determined that Brown was probably in the “yellow zone” with others.

And for his “abrasive, abusive and unprofessional behavior” toward many crew members, he was found guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

Brown was the 12th commanding officer relieved of duty by the Navy this year.

He continues a trend of leaders brought down by personal misbehavior – as opposed to tactical mistakes – in a Navy that is increasingly sensitive about sexual harassment, alcohol-fueled conduct and the tone of the work environment.

Brown started his Navy career in 1986 as an enlisted sailor and was chosen for Officer Candidate School in 1989. He took command of the big-deck amphib Boxer in July after serving as its executive officer, the No. 2 person on the ship, for more than a year.

The problems started with one complaint of inappropriate sexual behavior and ballooned once investigators began questioning the crew.

One female officer gave investigators a laundry list of odd behavior by Brown, going back to his days as the ship's executive officer. While redactions in the investigation make it hard to be sure, this officer is likely the person who Brown is accused of sexually harassing.

Brown asked her out for dinner when the ship docked in Dubai, and put his hands on her hips for an uncomfortable amount of time at a bar in Bahrain.

But the most flagrant behavior was when Brown asked about problems in her personal life, then as her executive officer ordered her to sit down in his cabin.

He told her “men do not want to drive a new car without test driving it” and that she was “very attractive” and, “if he were 20 years younger, she’d have a real problem on her hands,” according to the investigation.

The officer told investigators that while she believed Brown viewed himself as a father figure toward her, she became uncomfortable around him and began avoiding being alone with him.

But Brown had problems with other Boxer females, as well.

A few complained to investigators that he brought up the subject of birth control, making them uncomfortable. He also reportedly said women who have abortions can come back to the ship if they are good sailors.

This behavior is what Navy investigators called “yellow zone” conduct – in other words, not outright infractions but on the path to it.

Also, there were two other instances of Brown placing hands on females’ hips or waist.

The birth control discussions were prompted by Brown’s anger over a high pregnancy rate on the ship. Prior to one deployment, two officers and 25 female sailors reported pregnancies, making them unable to deploy.

In Brown’s own statement to investigators, he denied discussing birth control with his female crew members, instead saying the topic was family and career planning.

Boxer crew members said Brown seemed to favor his female officers, some of whom reported that his heart was in the right place but that the attention was uncomfortable.

The other side of the skipper’s personality was roughshod treatment of his officers.

He commonly yelled profanities at them such as “stupid motherfuckers.”

And it wasn’t just officers. He screamed and cursed at a group of first class petty officers to the point that the sailors were “shocked and scared,” according to the investigation.

Finally, Brown screamed at the ship’s port engineer so loudly that another leader on the ship herded sailors away from his door so they wouldn’t hear it.

One crew member called the skipper’s manner 1980s-style management. Others said Brown was warned about his shouting and language, but he didn’t change his ways.

Brown has been temporarily reassigned to the staff of the San Diego-based Naval Surface Force command.

Army Vet Has Government Letter Declaring Him Dead

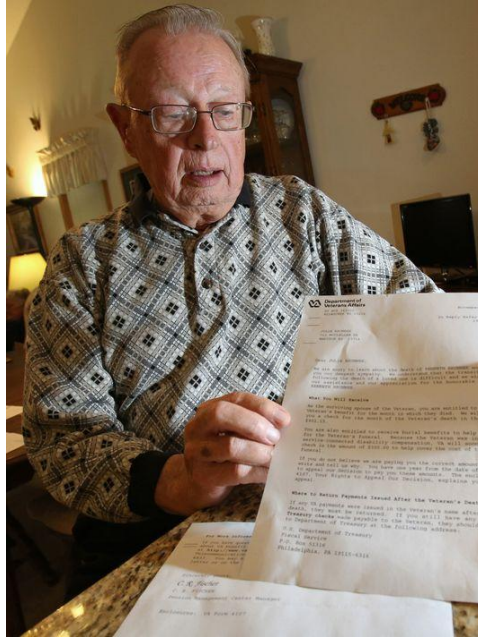


Photo: Amber Arnold/AP

November 13, 2014 The Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — An 81-year-old Army veteran from Madison wants the government to know he's alive and well, despite its information to the contrary.

Kenneth Brunner's wife, Julie, received a letter Monday from the U.S. Veterans Benefits Administration, expressing sympathy for his passing and directing her not to cash any more benefits checks. Kenneth Brunner said he tried to call the agency Tuesday to deliver a few choice words, but the office was closed for Veterans Day.

Brunner receives a monthly disability check because of serious injuries he received in 1955 while in the Army, he said. He was injured at a Texas Air Force base when a cable snapped on a piece of heavy equipment and struck him, the State Journal reported.

"It broke me up pretty bad," Brunner said. "For the first few days in the hospital they told me they didn't know if I was going to live or die."

The letter from the agency said Julie Brunner could cash the check issued for the month in which her husband died, but none that may have been issued after that.

It also said the agency would contribute \$300 for funeral expenses.

"We are sorry to learn about the death of KENNETH BRUNNER and extend to you our deepest sympathy," the letter reads. "We understand that the transition period following the death of a loved one is difficult and we wish to offer our assistance and our appreciation for the honorable service of KENNETH BRUNNER."

Craig Larson, spokesman for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs regional office in Chicago, said the error will be fixed. He said he wasn't sure how often similar letters have been sent out to veterans who are still alive.

"I do not have an exact number, but it occurs infrequently due to human error, such as incorrect data entry," Larson said.

Brunner said he planned to try contacting the government again on Wednesday.

"I'm going to set them straight," Brunner said.

"I'm sure as hell alive."

Incompetent VA Bureaucrat Incompetently Attacks Union That Reported Her Incompetence: Then Stupidly And Incompetently Attacks Newspaper That Also Reported Her Incompetence

November 13, 2014 by William R. Levesque, Tampa Bay Times [Excerpts]

A week after a "no confidence" vote by an employee union, the chief of the Department of Veterans Affairs regional benefits office at Bay Pines says she wants to win back the confidence of any employees who doubt her leadership.

But director Kerrie Witty's response to the Nov. 5 vote may have further enraged the union leaders she was trying to mollify.

Witty sent by email Wednesday a statement to Local 1594 of the American Federation of Government Employees saying she would "take appropriate actions to gain back that confidence."

Witty then launched an attack on the union, saying it communicated the vote to her in an "unprofessional and disrespectful manner."

The union said it voted no confidence in Witty earlier this month, accusing her of a hostile relationship with the union and failing to address numerous issues.

Those include allegations of retaliation against union officials, not responding to employee grievances and failing to fix flaws in the system to identify errors in veteran disability claims.

Witty said the union criticisms are far off target. She accused union leaders of failing to work with her to resolve differences and said they rebuffed efforts at mediation.

"Did you know that on two occasions in the last two weeks I sat in a room waiting for AFGE to show up for a meeting we had scheduled ... but nobody came?" said Witty, who heads an office, near Seminole, that handles more veterans disability claims than any other in the VA.

Witty did not elaborate on why she thought communication of the no confidence vote was unprofessional, though the letter sent to her by the union detailing the vote was blunt and contained harsh criticism.

Valorie Reilly, Local 1594 president, could not be reached for comment Thursday.

But Reilly disputed Witty in an email response sent to the director, accusing her of scheduling meetings with union officials when she knew they were on leave.

"Action is needed, not more of the same," Reilly wrote. "Remember, we're interested in deeds, not words."

In an email to the Tampa Bay Times, Witty Thursday said she was "disappointed" the newspaper first published an article about the no confidence vote on Veterans Day.

Witty said an article on any topic other than one that honored veterans was inappropriate on such a holiday.

YOUR INVITATION:

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 email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Police Arrest 90-Year-Old Veteran And Two Pastors For Feeding Homeless People:

“One Of The Police Officers Said, ‘Drop That Plate Right Now,’ As If I Were Carrying A Weapon”



An ordinance was passed in Fort Lauderdale banning feeding the homeless in public. However, Arnold Abbott and two pastors defied city ordinance; compassion for others comes first.

[Thanks to Sandy Kelson, Veteran & Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

November 9, 2014 by Andrew Emmett, NationofChange

In an act of compassion and civil disobedience, a 90-year-old man and two pastors in Fort Lauderdale openly defied a new city ordinance barring anyone from feeding homeless people in public.

After police intervened and charged them with a crime, 90-year-old Arnold Abbott and Pastor Dwayne Black returned several days later to break the draconian law again. Although Abbott received another citation, police decided not to place him in custody.

Last Sunday, Arnold Abbott, Pastor Dwayne Black of The Sanctuary Church in Fort Lauderdale, and Mark Sims of St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church in Coral Springs fed homeless people in a public park in South Florida two days after the city passed a new ordinance outlawing the provision of food to vagrants in public.

After getting arrested, the two pastors and elderly homeless advocate each face a \$500 fine and up to 60 days in jail.

“One of the police officers said, ‘Drop that plate right now,’ as if I were carrying a weapon,” recalled Abbott. “It’s man’s inhumanity to man is all it is.”

On Wednesday evening, Abbott and Pastor Black remained undeterred as they served a four-course meal to nearly 100 homeless people at Fort Lauderdale Beach.

After police officers recorded the simple act of kindness on their video cameras, they escorted Abbott away from the crowd to fingerprint him and issue another citation. Wary of public backlash, law enforcement officials chose not to place Abbott in handcuffs and haul him off to jail again.

"I'm grateful that they allowed us to feed the people before they gave us the citation," Abbott stated afterward.

A World War II veteran and civil rights activist, Abbot has been serving the homeless for over 20 years in honor of his late wife.

Since feeding homeless people has become his life's work, Abbott operates several programs including a culinary school that trains homeless people how to cook while helping them find jobs in local kitchens. Through his nonprofit organization, Love Thy Neighbor, Abbott has helped put hundreds of homeless people through culinary school.

Homeless and addicted to crack six years before meeting Abbott, Rosemary Servoky became one of Abbott's numerous culinary students. She now works with Love Thy Neighbor and is living off the streets.

"Chef Arnold saved my life," admitted Servoky.

Backed by the Chamber of Commerce, the recent city ordinance is the fourth law Fort Lauderdale has passed this year against the homeless.

The other laws ban homeless people from panhandling at traffic intersections and outlaw sleeping or storing their belongings on public property. According to Pastor Black, the recent food-sharing ordinance passed after a long meeting past midnight after many people had gone home.

"It's a public health issue," Fort Lauderdale Mayor Jack Seiler rationalized. "The experts have all said that if you're going to feed them to get them from breakfast to lunch to dinner, all you're doing is enabling that cycle of homelessness."

One of these so-called experts is Ron Book, a city lobbyist who commended the Fort Lauderdale commissioners for passing the ordinance. Book told the commissioners that feeding impoverished people on the streets merely sanctions homelessness. Book added, "Whatever discourages feeding people on the streets is a positive thing."

Abbott boldly stated Mayor Seiler and the city commission are just puppets of business owners who want to either run the homeless out of town or keep them out of sight.

Fearing a drop in tourism and a recent rise in the local homeless population, city officials have decided to design laws targeted at punishing impoverished people instead of addressing the larger issues of assisting those often plagued by mental health disorders and substance abuse addictions.

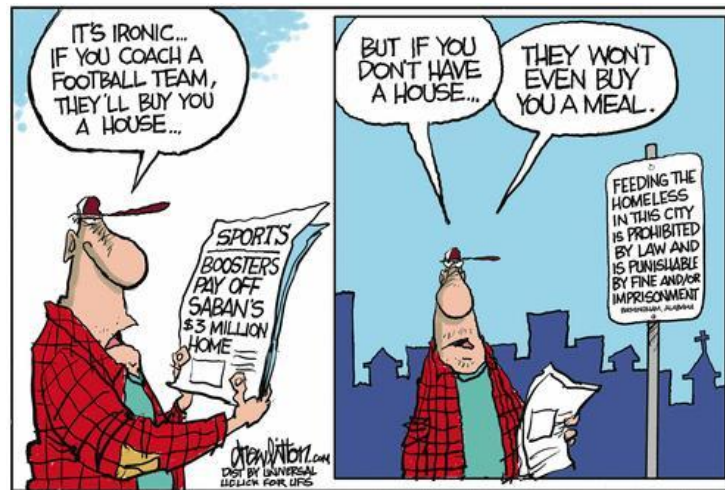
In 1999, the city attempted to prevent Abbott from feeding homeless people on Fort Lauderdale Beach. In response, Abbott sued the city and won. Abbott plans

to fight the charges against him and the pastors while acknowledging that he may be forced to take the city back to court in order to win.

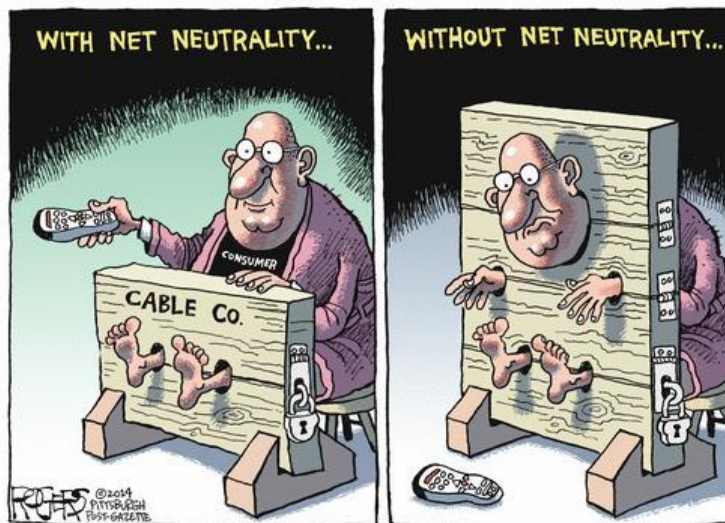
"I don't do things to purposefully aggravate the situation," stated Abbott. "I'm trying to work with the city. Any human has the right to help his fellow man."

Over 30 cities across the nation have outlawed or are considering criminalizing the provision of food to homeless people. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, over 20 cities have devised laws against giving food to homeless people since January 2013.

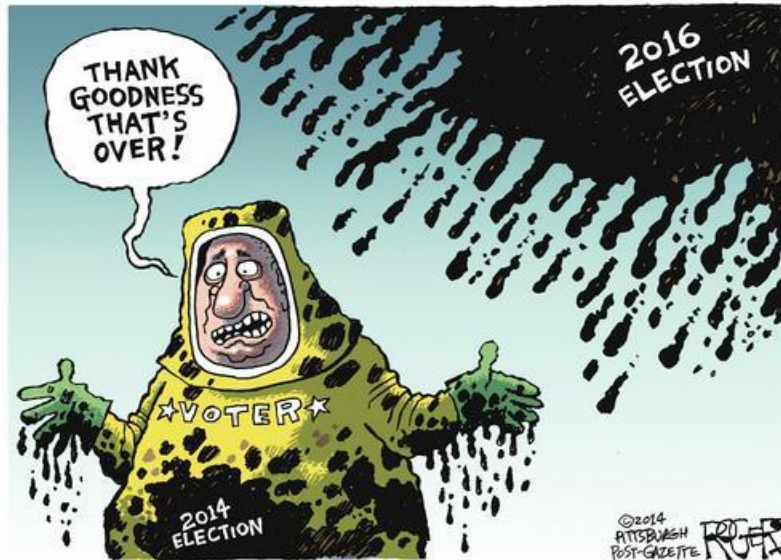
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Obama Wants Foreign Organizations To Have Same Rights As U.S. Government Possesses: Administration Asks Congress To Allow Aid To Overseas “Torturers, Murderers And War Criminals” Also “People Involved In Terrorism”

Nov. 13, 2014 By KEN DILANIAN, AP [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration has asked Congress repeatedly to exempt its military effort against the Islamic State from a longstanding ban on U.S. assistance to torturers and war criminals, highlighting doubts about finding "clean" American allies in a region wracked by ethnic animosity and religious extremism.

The latest proposal is included in a Nov. 10 request to Congress for \$1.6 billion to train Iraqi and Kurdish forces to fight IS as part of a \$5.6 billion request to expand the U.S. mission in Iraq.

The 1997 Leahy Law, named after Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, bars the U.S. from funding military units suspected of "gross human rights violations," which include murder, torture and extrajudicial imprisonment.

Top military officers have long complained that the law slows their work with local forces, while human rights activists call it an important safeguard against U.S. complicity in abuses by unsavory allies.

The Obama administration's written proposal includes a blanket exemption from the Leahy provisions and related constraints as it trains and equips Iraqi and Kurdish forces to fight IS.

Iraqi government forces — the main intended recipients of the new aid — were notorious for human rights abuses under the previous prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki. In July, a United Nations human rights report documented allegations of atrocities by the government, including shelling civilians and executing Sunni detainees.

The Associated Press reported this week that Shiite militias backed by Baghdad are engaging in brutal acts as they battle IS, a Sunni Muslim group, and there are allegations of mass killings of Sunnis.

Administration officials say they have and will continue to vet any recipients of military training and aid, whether the government of Iraq, Kurdish forces or Syrian rebels.

But they say the various legal restrictions imposed by Congress over the years — bans on assistance to people involved in terrorism and drug dealing, as well as human rights abuses — bring with them a bureaucratic process that will slow down American efforts against the Islamic State group.

Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke of speed, not human rights, when he backed the exemption at a House Armed Services Committee hearing Thursday.

"We think that a national security waiver in the hands of the secretary of defense allows us to move with the pace we believe we need to move," Dempsey said.

It's true, said Patrick Skinner, a former CIA case officer with experience in the Middle East, that there are no "good guys in this fight." But it's not true that "only thugs can fight thugs," he said.

"You don't build a credible, acceptable opposition with war criminals," he said. "I understand why people want to ignore our standards and laws for the sake of doing 'something.' But that doesn't make it the smart move."

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