

WAUSHARA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES

VET'S VANTAGE

APRIL 2011

Possible Fraud/Veteran Affairs Services

An organization called Veterans Affairs Services (VAS) is providing benefit and general information on VA and gathering personal information on veterans. This organization is not affiliated with VA in any way. Websites with the name "vaservices" immediately after the "www" ARE NOT part of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Government agency. Do not go to them or if approached or called, do not offer them any information concerning yourself or data on other veterans. Keep in mind that the real VA website ends in —.gov. Be aware that the Department of Veterans Affairs does not randomly call veterans, nor does it ask veterans for information which it does not already have—like Social Security Numbers. In particular, if you have not dealt with the VA previously—and in person—and all of a sudden, you receive a call from someone saying they are with the VA or something similar sounding, hang up the phone. Also, do not respond to emails which suggest that they are from the VA. The VA never conducts official business nor asks for personal information by email. VAS may be gaining access to military personnel through their close resemblance to the VA name and seal. In addition, GC requests that if you have any examples of VAS acts that violate chapter 59 of Title 38 United States Code, such as VAS employees assisting veterans in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits, please pass any additional information to

Michael G. Daugherty, Staff Attorney, Department of Veterans Affairs Office of General Counsel (022G2)810 Vermont Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20420. [Source: Office of the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, VSO Liaison Kevin Secor msg. 23 Feb 2011 ++]



Waushara County Veterans' Services will be CLOSED

May 2-May 6, 2011

(for Wisconsin Benefit training purposes.)

There will be no one in the office to assist you.

We will also be CLOSED

June 6-June 10, 2011

(for National Benefit training purposes.)

In order to provide our veterans with the best of care, we need continuing education in benefits and changes under new laws.

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A veteran is someone who, at one point in their lives, wrote a blank check made payable to 'The United States of America' for an amount of 'up to and including my life'. This is an Honor, and there are way to many people in this country who no longer understand it.'

-Quote from a friend

AFTER READING, PLEASE PASS THIS TO ANOTHER VETERAN !



McMurdo Nuclear Power Plant, High Risk for Cancer for Personnel?



A small nuclear power plant operated by the United States at Antarctica's McMurdo Sound has been implicated in dozens of cases of an unusual cancer in personnel who worked at or near the station between the years 1964 and 1973, US and New Zealand media have indicated.

Newspapers and television stations from San Diego, Ohio, Florida, Idaho and other states have charged that former naval personnel who worked on an Antarctic military action called —Operation Deep Freeze contracted their cancers from working at or near the station during its short nine-year operational period. The reactor, a PM-3A 1.75 Megawatt installation that also provided heating and water desalinization, was used to power the McMurdo US Naval Station.

The PM-3A reactor operated on uranium-235 fuel of 93 percent enrichment, according to official US Navy documents. Those interviewed by ABC news also indicated that the reactor at McMurdo Antarctic base was known among staff as —nukey poo for the frequency and volume of its leaks. A US naval report issued upon its decommissioning http://www.bellona.org/filearchive/fil_wews_mcmurdo-final-operating-report.pdf indicated the reactor experienced 438 malfunctions — nearly 56 a year — in its operational lifetime, including leaking water surrounding the reactor and hairline cracks in the reactor lining. The emissions of low level waste water where in direct contravention of the Antarctic Treaty, which bans military operations as well as radioactive waste in Antarctica. In one of the more egregious PM-3A incidents, in 1963, the reactor was shut down due to a lack of coolant in the reactor core.

The plant was finally decommissioned in connection with

"possible stress corrosion cracking," the US Navy said. "The cause of the increased malfunctions is attributable to the fact that the initial control rod drive mechanism system was a complex experimental system which was continually modified in efforts for improvement."

The Navy report, nonetheless indicated that no excessive radiation was found at the McMurdo site. The plant, built by Lockheed-Martin, was designed to fit inside a C-130 Hercules US military cargo transport, but because of fears of what the consequences of a crash would be, the unit was shipped to McMurdo instead. After the reactor was closed down, the US shipped 7700 cubic meters of radioactive contaminated rock and dirt to California, but passed through Dunedin, with a population of 124,000, the second largest city on New Zealand's South Island, where it stayed for four days, raising local concerns, the New Zealand news site stuff.co.nz. Yet, fuel for McMurdo routinely passed through the New Zealand port of Lyttelton, 12 kilometres south of Christchurch — South Island's biggest city at 376,000 inhabitants — on US Navy vessels via a secret US-New Zealand agreement that the US would pay for any damage, stuff.co.nz reported.

One US naval veteran from Ohio, Charles Swinney, died a year ago after a 16-year-battle with cancer. According to his wife Elaine, who lives in Cleveland, Swinney had some 200 tumors when he died. She told the Cleveland ABC-TV affiliate that her husband had worried for years as his cancer developed that it was a result of his work at the McMurdo Station. Swinney had written many letters to the US Veterans Administration questioning the link between his cancer and the reactor but received few responses.

The Veterans Administration is especially touchy about admitting to cases of radioactive contamination. Over the 10 years US forces have been using depleted uranium body armor, combat vehicle armor and bullets in its various and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, the Veterans Administration has refused to admit that so-called Gulf War Syndrome has anything to do with radiation poisoning, instead pathologizing this veterans group as shell shocked.

The initial media reports connecting Swinney's death to his work with the McMurdo reactor brought forth an avalanche of other complaints lodged to the US Department of Veterans Affairs and Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown from other veterans of the

McMurdo site suffering from cancer. The Department of Veterans Affairs and Brown have promised to assist veterans in determining if there is a connection between the nuclear plant and veterans who have filed claims, said ABC in Cleveland. Brown told ABC that he is sending letters to both US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki with requests to investigate veterans' cancer claims.

Thomas Pamperin, the Veterans Administration's Deputy Under Secretary for Policy thanked the media for its work on this important issue. "We are committed to working with the Department of Defense, veteran service organizations and veterans to ensure that all those who may have been exposed at McMurdo Station receive the maximum amount of care and benefits they are entitled to under the law," Pamperin told ABC news in Cleveland. But this comes as cold comfort to those who are still suffering from cancers that the US Veterans Administration has yet to connect to the McMurdo Station to the illness.

Jim Landy of Pensacola is fighting stomach, liver and brain cancer that he links to McMurdo. "I believe it was a greater risk than we all assumed," Landy told ABC-TV.

Another veteran in Wisconsin survived testicular and lung cancer according to New Zealand's stuff.co.uk.

Bob Boyles of North Carolina told of how he collapsed and was rushed to hospital, and was told that he was suffering from radiation-related cancer. "The first thing the doctors asked me was, well, that's the type of cancer you typically get from exposure from radiation," Boyles said.

ABC said before dying in 2002 Karl Sackman of Idaho, another naval officer who served at the McMurdo station, wrote the Veterans Administration saying there had been leaks at the plant.

[Source:
http://www.bellona.org/articles/articles_2011/McMurdo_leaks_Charles_Digges_article_7_Mar_2011_++]



STOLEN VALOR LAKEPORT, CA

The commander of the Lakeport, Calif., Veterans of Foreign Wars post has resigned under a cloud of suspicion that he is not the war hero he claims to be. Robert L. Deppe, 57, also was arrested earlier this month on suspicion of stealing money from a family member and replacing the \$100 bills he took with phony money, according to the Lake County Sheriff's Office. Deppe resigned in February two days after the VFW post asked him to authorize it to request his military records, said Kirk Macdonald, adjutant of VFW Post 2015. He'd been the commander three years. His letter of resignation stated only that he was quitting for personal reasons, Macdonald said. But Deppe has been dogged by war veterans who believe he is a fraud, accusing him of falsifying documents that appear to bestow him with the Silver and Bronze stars and a Purple Heart for heroism in Vietnam. The POW Network, a group dedicated to uncovering "stolen valor," claims he plagiarized and modified other people's war stories.

Deppe is not on the roster for the U.S. Army, Company H, 75th Infantry, for 1971, as he claims, said William Page, who fought in Vietnam during the time Deppe claims to have been there and who occasionally works with the POW Network. Nor did the National Personnel Records Center have record of his service, said Page, who obtained the information under the Freedom of Information Act. "We cannot find any record of him being in the military," said Page, who was an infantryman during the war and now lives in Louisiana. Page said he began looking into Deppe's background in 2005 after he recognized his own story in Deppe's autobiographical account of his year in Vietnam and how he earned his medals. "I saw this story and I said, dang, this guy is talking just like me," said Page, who has a combat infantryman's badge and a Bronze Star, among other "little doodads." Page

also found excerpts from the story of a man who saved his life in Vietnam and that of a man from his platoon who died. "He's just full of baloney," he said.

Page said it's all too common for people to make false claims of valor. He noted that Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal said he served in Vietnam when he was running for the Senate last year. In fact, Blumenthal received five military deferments before enlisting in the Marine Reserve, which enabled him to avoid overseas combat. Blumenthal apologized and called the claim "a few misplaced words." In Phoenix last year, a former chaplain was indicted for making false claims and sentenced to 60 months of probation and ordered to pay about \$28,000. He was charged with making false claims about being decorated, which helped him become an officer in the Arizona National Guard and to enter the Chaplain Corps. Both increased his military salary and benefits. Such claims are all too common, Page said. "In the census 10 years ago, over 11 million men claimed to be [Vietnam] veterans when only 3 million served. It's rampant," he said. [Source: Press Democrat Glenda Anderson article 28 Feb 2011 ++]

WDVA Secretary Black Resigns

Effective April 1, 2011 Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, Kenneth Black resigned his position. In a letter to the WDVA Board Chair Dan Naylor, Secretary Black's letter stated, "This letter confirms that I am resigning as Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs. It has been my honor and privilege to work for the veterans of the state." Secretary Black's resignation was accepted.

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day



The U.S. Senate on March 7 declared March 30th as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, agreeing unanimously to

a resolution introduced by Senator Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

On March 30, 1973, all U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. This March 30th, the Senate has encouraged Americans across the country to recognize Vietnam veterans for their sacrifice and demonstrate a warm welcome to these soldiers who returned from war to a politically divided country. —I'm pleased that the Senate has agreed to set aside a day to give our Vietnam veterans a warm, long-overdue welcome home. I strongly encourage communities throughout North Carolina and across the country to observe this day with activities and events that honor these veterans for their service. It's time they receive the recognition they have earned and deserve. This day also provides our nation with an important teaching moment. Never again should our men and women serving in the armed forces receive the same treatment as those returning from Vietnam, said Senator Richard Burr.

Senator Burr introduced the resolution for the second consecutive year on February 16, 2011. The United States became involved in Vietnam because policy-makers believed that if South Vietnam fell to a communist government, communism would spread throughout the rest of Southeast Asia. The US Armed Forces began serving in an advisory role to the South Vietnamese in 1961, and in 1965, ground combat troops were sent into Vietnam.

On March 30, 1973, after many years of combat, all US troops withdrew. More than 58,000 members of the United States Armed Forces lost their lives and more than 300,000 were wounded in Vietnam. Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Thad Cochran (R-MS), James Inhofe (R-OK), and Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Mike Johanns (R-NE) co-sponsored the legislation. The resolution now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration. [Source: Sen. Richard Burr]



Medical Alert for Gulf War Veterans

Inflammatory Bowel Diseases and Higher Risk For Blood Clots

Irritable Bowel Syndrome is one of the conditions listed by VA that falls under gulf war illness. The gulf war veterans also have a researcher at VA Minneapolis, Dr Ron Bach studying Hypercoagulation in Gulf War Illness. So the following news article on medical research today on Blood clots and Inflammatory Bowel diseases/disorders needs to be circulated to the Gulf War Veterans and to the health care providers and researchers that are concerned about our gulf war veterans 1990-1991. The take home highlights of the article are in Bold and underlined to draw your attention to what is the most important items in the research.

Inflammatory bowel disease more than doubles the risk of a potentially fatal blood clot in the legs or lungs (VTE), reveals research published online in the journal Gut.

Inflammatory bowel disease is an umbrella term used to include Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Venous thromboembolism (VTE), which includes deep vein thrombosis (DVT), pulmonary embolism (PE), and superior sagittal sinus thrombosis (SSST), affects around 2 in every 1000 people in developed countries annually.

The authors compared the number of new cases of VTE arising in just under 50,000 children and adults with inflammatory bowel disease and more than 477,000 members of the general public.

The study period spanned 1980 to 2007 and took account of known VTE risk factors, such as a broken bone, cancer, surgery and pregnancy.

The results showed that the risk of VTE was twice as high in those with inflammatory bowel disease as it was in the general public.

VTE is more common in older people, irrespective of whether they have inflammatory bowel disease or not, but the risk of VTE in patients with inflammatory bowel disease was highest in younger age groups, when compared with the general public.

In those aged 20 or younger, the likelihood of a pulmonary embolism, which can be fatal, was low, but it was six times as common among those with inflammatory bowel disease as it was among the general public in this age group.

Even after taking account of concurrent cardiovascular disease, diabetes, congestive heart failure, the use of hormone replacement therapy or antipsychotic drugs, all of which are known to heighten the likelihood of VTE, the risk still remained up to 80% higher.

The findings suggest that inflammatory bowel disease may be an independent risk factor for clot formation, say the authors.

Source

British Medical Journal

Arlington Cemetery: 90 Year Old Urns Up For Auction?

The Army is investigating how 9-foot-tall, decorative marble urns that once flanked the stage of Arlington National Cemetery's Memorial Amphitheater ended up on a private auction block. An Alexandria auction house is planning to sell 14 decorative urns that once stood in the amphitheater next to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a memorial visited by presidents for 90 years. The urns were apparently removed from the

cemetery during a 1990's renovation. Since 1997 they have been at a Maryland antiques shop, but the shop owner is closing the store and auctioning its inventory. He says he bought the urns from the company that renovated the amphitheater, replaced the urns and took away the originals. After learning of the sale from The Washington Post, the Army on January 21 asked The Potomack Company to halt the urns'

auction. [Source: AP article 22 Jan 2011 ++]



9' Marble Urns from Arlington Cemetery on the Auction block?



GI BILL: New Formula One Fee Fits All?

In an effort to simplify the tuition formula for veterans headed to college, lawmakers in December 2010 approved a measure to pay a flat rate of \$17,500 per year for tuition and fees at all colleges except public schools in veterans' home states, which are covered in full. For most student vets, the changes mean a sizable boost in the money they receive. But for a smaller group the change will mean a painful cut in funding they thought would be available to pay for classes next year.

Veterans groups who had supported the legislation in December are scrambling to find a fix before August, when the new provisions go into effect. Without one, thousands of student veterans could be forced to choose between taking out unanticipated student loans or taking more drastic action. "We've heard from a lot of people who are considering transferring or dropping out of school altogether rather than take out big loans," said John McClellan, an organizer with Military Veterans of Columbia University. "They thought they had the promise of funding in place, but now it's gone."

When lawmakers passed the post-9/11 GI Bill benefits three years ago, the plan was designed to allow the new wave of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to attend college without incurring tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Veterans were guaranteed a full four years of tuition, with a maximum benefit equaling the cost of the most expensive public school in a veteran's home state. But the changes also brought significant inequities. Students qualified for tuition at those colleges based on the most expensive public schools in their home state. For private universities, or public schools in other states, their tuition payments were capped based on those same home state rates. Last semester, veterans from Texas -- which boasts the most expensive rates in the country -- could receive more than \$47,000 in tuition for other schools, while veterans from neighboring Arkansas -- one of the least expensive -- would receive only about \$7,000. Last year, more than 126,000 veterans took classes at private colleges with GI Bill funding, many attending the same schools but receiving those vastly different payouts.

To solve that problem, veterans groups began pushing for a simpler tuition formula: a single flat rate for any school outside the home state public colleges. Tim Embree, legislative associate with the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, said his group pushed for a \$25,000 cap, likely enough to cover all but a few expensive cases. But the Senate knocked that figure down to \$17,500. The result is that students from 11 states will lose money next semester, some more than \$10,000 for the fall alone. On the other hand, student veterans in 39 other states and the District of Columbia will get thousands more for college tuition, allowing them to afford some schools they had never considered in the past. Students attending public universities in their home states will not be affected by the change. The legislation also included more money for distance learners and online classes, and expanded the number of National Guardsmen eligible for the education benefits. Lawmakers also changed a provision in the living stipend to only pay students rent money for months during their semester, which trimmed an additional \$1,000 to \$2,000 from their annual benefit.

When the bill passed amid a flurry of last-minute legislation in December, the result left many students midway through their college careers with potentially thousands of dollars in unexpected debt. "It's ridiculous to deter students from going to a good private school, but that's what these changes do," said Derek Blumke, co-founder of Student Veterans of America. In an angry speech just before the bill's passage, former Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., then the ranking member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, warned the changes would create more problems than it solved, and that lawmakers hadn't taken time to properly research the measure. "These enhancements are being done at the expense of some veterans to the benefit of other veterans," he said. "If you went out and surveyed the average student veteran, I believe they would oppose improving their own benefit at the expense of one of their comrades." But in the end, he was one of only three lawmakers in the House to vote against the measure, against 409 representatives approving it.

Both SVA and IAVA -- along with a number of other veterans groups -- supported the legislation last year. Blumke and Embree said they still believe the bill helps more veterans than it hurts, but both groups are

pushing lawmakers to insert a grandfather clause in the legislation before August. "We need to get action on this," Blumke said. Capitol Hill staffers acknowledge the problem but question whether lawmakers will have time to address it in coming months.

Budget cuts in the current fiscal year and looming budget fights for fiscal 2012 have dominated conversation in Congress, and any additional cost for the grandfather clause will likely have to be offset with spending cuts somewhere else. No legislation has been introduced in either chamber to deal with the problem.

Even though the changes don't go into effect until August, most students need to finalize their plans for the fall semester in the next two months. [Source: Stars and Stripes Leo Shane article 20 Feb 2011 ++]

Federal Judge Fines VA

A Newburgh law firm has convinced a federal judge to sanction the Department of Veterans Affairs for waiting more than two years before explaining what benefits a veteran should be receiving, the firm announced this week. Katrina J. Eagle, director of the Veteran Service Group at Finkelstein and Partners, said the \$20,000 sanction was believed to be the first ever imposed on the VA. Eagle represented Brea, Calif., resident Cleveland Harvey in a case involving Harvey's VA benefits. She said the agency had delayed a decision for nearly two years on Harvey's request for a review of his veterans benefits. "For the first time in the history of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims found the VA in civil contempt for failure to expeditiously handle a veteran's claim after the court had issued a previous decision on the case," Finkelstein spokeswoman Danielle Mackey said. Eagle said she hoped the court's sanction would help other veterans receive more timely service from the VA. "This is a significant decision for the rights of veteran claimants. Instead of receiving the benefits he was due for his sacrifice and service to our nation, Mr. Harvey dealt with a nightmare of unnecessary delays and distractions. With this decision, it is our hope that other veteran claimants will not have to suffer the same poor treatment," she said.

[Source: Poughkeepsie Journal Larry Hertz article 18 Feb 2011 ++]



Notes of Interest



●**AF Academy.** The Air Force Academy is accepting fewer new cadets under a mandate to reduce the size of the student body by about 9% to save money, according to an Air Force times report. Lt. Gen. Michael Gould, the academy superintendent, says the Air Force ordered the school to reduce enrollment to 4,000 by Oct. 1, 2012, from about 4,400 today.

●**VA Clothing Allowance.** The Veterans Affairs Department is amending rules for providing a clothing allowance to disabled veterans whose garments are subject to wear because of prosthetic or orthopedic devices. Before —now, veterans have been limited to getting one payment, currently \$716 a year, but rules proposed February 2, will allow two payments if a veteran has multiple devices wearing out his clothing. The change results from a federal court ruling involving a Vietnam veteran...who requested two clothing payments because he had lost both legs and an arm during the war.

●**VA Cemetery.** Department of Veterans Affairs announced they are taking action to begin the process of locating a National Veteran Cemetery in Western New York. 7 in New York State currently has seven national veteran cemeteries, However, the closest to Western New York is located in Bath, NY, approximately 80 miles away.

●**Baghdad.** Iraq's capital city government demanded the United States apologize to the Iraqi people and pay

\$1 billion for the damage done to the city not by bombs but by blast walls and Humvees since the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

Tricare fees. The Pentagon's controversial push to ratchet up health care fees for working-age retirees got a surprisingly warm reception from military associations in Washington, setting the stage for the first fee hike since the Tricare health system began 15 years ago.

●**COLA 2012.** After more than two years the CPI is back above zero early this year. Inflation rose 0.5% in January and now stands at plus 0.3% for the year. Perhaps we may yet see a modest COLA increase in 2012.



●**Baldness.** A team of researchers from UCLA and the Veterans Administration that was experimenting with mice to learn more about how stress affects gastrointestinal function injected...bald mice with a chemical compound called astressin-B, which blocks the action of a stress hormone that caused hair loss in the mice. The researchers "expected to monitor how astressin-B affected the mice guts, but when they returned to the mice three months later, they couldn't tell the treated mice from their hairy brethren."

*“Only summer grasses after
the mighty warriors and
their dreams of glory”*

Basho 1644-1694

Veteran Status

Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR) is taking another shot at better defining who can legally call themselves a veteran.

An attempt at this during the previous Congress died when one senator blocked action. Pryor introduced a bill March 4th that has the full support of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS). Current law requires someone to have served a certain period on federal status to qualify for full standing as a veteran. Someone who served 20 years in the National Guard or Reserve without that qualifying period is a military retiree, but not a veteran. Pryor's bill, Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act of 2011 (S.491), has been referred to the Committee on Veterans Affairs. The text of the bill reads, "Any person who is entitled under chapter 1223 of title 10 to retired pay for non-regular service or, but for age, would be entitled under such chapter to retired pay for non-regular service shall be honored as a veteran but shall not be entitled to any benefit by reason of this section." Although it will not add any benefits and, therefore, has no cost to the government, the bill would allow someone who serves honorably for 20 years in the Guard or Reserve the simple privilege of legally being a veteran. Technically, a person who is not a legal veteran is not supposed to wear medals on Veterans Day, for example, or salute the playing of the national anthem, although this happens frequently, of course. [Source: NGAUS Washington Report 8 Mar 2011 ++]





DOD Rape Victim Lawsuit

More than a dozen U.S. veterans who say they were raped or assaulted by comrades filed a class-action suit in federal court Tuesday attempting to force the Pentagon to change how it handles such cases. The current and former service members — 15 women and two men — describe circumstances in which servicemen allegedly got away with rape and other sexual abuse while their victims were ordered to continue to serve with them. The suit names Defense Secretary Robert Gates and his predecessor, Donald H. Rumsfeld. The plaintiffs say individual commanders have too much say in how allegations are handled and that they want reforms in the system. The alleged attackers in the lawsuit include an Army criminal investigator and an Army National Guard commander. The abuse alleged ranges from obscene verbal abuse to gang rape.

In one incident, an Army Reservist says two male colleagues raped her in Iraq and videotaped the attack. She complained to authorities after the men circulated the video to colleagues. Despite being bruised from her shoulders to elbows from being held down, she says charges weren't filed because the commander determined she "did not act like a rape victim" and "did not struggle enough" and authorities said they didn't want to delay the scheduled return of the alleged attackers to the United States. "The problem of rape in the military is not only service members getting raped, but it's the entire way that the military as a whole is dealing with it," said Panayiota Bertzikis, who is a plaintiff in the lawsuit and claims she was raped in 2006. "From survivors having to be involuntarily discharged from service, the constant verbal abuse, once a survivor does come forward your entire unit is known to turn their back on you.

The entire culture needs to be changed."

Although The Associated Press normally does not identify the victims of sexual assault, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit have publicly discussed the cases. Bertzikis, 29, of Somerville, Mass., now is executive director of the Military Rape Crisis Center. She says she was raped by a Coast Guard shipmate while out on a social hike with him in Burlington, Vt. Bertzikis complained to her commanding officer, but she said authorities did not take substantial steps to investigate the matter. Instead, she said, they forced her to live on the same floor as the man she had accused and tolerated others calling her a "liar" and "whore."

Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said in a statement that sexual assault is a wider societal problem and that Gates has been working to ensure the military is doing all it can to prevent and respond to it. "That means providing more money, personnel, training and expertise, including reaching out to other large institutions such as universities to learn best practices," Morrell said. "This is now a command priority, but we clearly still have more work to do in order to ensure all of our service members are safe from abuse."

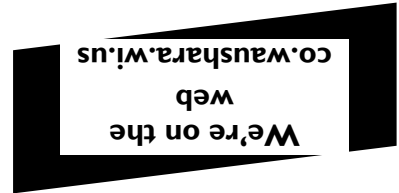
The military had already planned to roll out a new hotline victims can call in April, said Pentagon spokeswoman Cynthia O. Smith. It has another initiative that encourages service members to help those who are assaulted or raped. In 2005, the military created an office charged with preventing sexual assault. Victims can opt to file a "restricted" or confidential report that allows them to get medical attention without an investigation being triggered. Smith said in a statement that when commanders learn of accusations of misconduct they are responsible for investigating it and taking appropriate action. She said commanders have demonstrated "time and time again" in

sexual assault cases and in others that they "take seriously the trust that comes with leadership and the need for good order and discipline."

Sarah Albertson, a former Marine corporal who is one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said that one of the hurdles in getting improvements in the system is that military commanders do not want any marks on their record such as a rape in their unit. Albertson alleges she reported she was raped in 2006 by a fellow Marine, but instead of helping her, she was forced to live one floor below the alleged perpetrator for two years. "People who did believe me and had my back and were supportive of me were still telling me, 'Don't tell anybody about this, don't go to the public, don't let this get out because it will make the military look bad,'" Albertson said.

In many of the described cases, no charges were filed. In other cases, the alleged attackers faced lesser charges and were allowed to remain in the military, according to the lawsuit. Anuradha Bhagwati, 35, executive director of the Service Women's Action Network, said the Defense Department's own statistics show that fewer than one in five of these cases are even referred for court martial. She said unit commanders are the judge and the jury in these types of cases. Too often, she said, perpetrators are given non-judicial punishments. "A lawsuit like this is needed because change cannot happen on the inside. DoD has had literally decades, perhaps more, to change the culture within the military. They've proven that they can't, and even the minor changes they've made the last few years are so superficial," Bhagwati said. [Source: NPR AP article 15 Feb 2011++]

THERE IS COUNSELING OFFERED THROUGH THE VA FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL TRAUMA..



Appointments appreciated

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VA TINNITUS CARE UPDATE

Scientists from the University of Texas announced in the scientific journal *Nature* that they have found a way to treat chronic tinnitus. Tinnitus, a chronic ringing in the ears is the most common service connected disability for enlisted Air Force retirees and veterans returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The VA pays approximately one billion dollars (\$1 billion) a year for service connected disability payments for tinnitus. Doctors believe that over 23 million Americans suffer from some degree of this condition including 10% of seniors and a whopping 40% of veterans. The scientists believe that it is caused by the brain failing to adjust to nerve damage caused to exposure to loud or continual noise. Michael Kilgard, the co-author of the study said: —Brain changes in re-

sponse to nerve damage or cochlear trauma cause irregular neural activity believed to be responsible for many types of chronic pain and tinnitus. We believe the part of the brain that processes sounds- the auditory cortex-delegates too many neurons to some frequencies and things begin to go awry. The treatment (so far successful in rats) electronically stimulates the Vagus nerve (which runs from the brain to the abdomen) while playing a high pitched tone. Human clinical trials are expected to start in the next several months. This technique called VNS is already used to treat approximately 50,000 people with epilepsy or depression. If the trials are successful this would be the first treatment that would eliminate rather than just mask tinnitus. [Source: TREA Washington Update 14 Jan 2011 ++]

The Mayo Clinic states that Tinnitus (TIN-i-tus) is noise or ringing in the ears. A common problem, tinnitus affects about 1 in 5 people. Tinnitus isn't a condition itself — it's a symptom of an underlying condition, such as age-related hearing loss, ear injury or a circulatory system disorder. Although bothersome, tinnitus usually isn't a sign of something serious. Although it can worsen with age, for many people, tinnitus can improve with treatment. Treating an identified underlying cause sometimes helps. Other treatments reduce or mask the noise, making tinnitus less noticeable. Veterans having no hearing protection that suffer from tinnitus should consider filing a claim with your County Veteran Service officer. In Waushara County., Bill Rosenau, CVSO (920)787-0446