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**VA NEWS FLASH** from *Larry Scott* at [VA Watchdog dot Org](#) -- 01-21-2008 #3

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## **EDITORIAL: NEGLECT OF VETERANS UNCONSCIONABLE --**

**"If the American government and the American people continue to break faith with the young men and women who have sworn to defend them...then we can't be surprised when, if we call on them to serve in the future, no one responds."**

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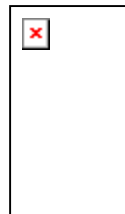
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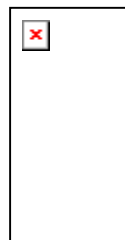
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Every so often an editorial on veterans' issue "nails it." This is one of those.

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Editorial below:

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## THE SUN CHRONICLE

### EDITORIAL: Neglect of vets unconscionable

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle..."

Those words, from Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, are quite literally carved into the walls of the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C.

With that kind of authority for its mission statement, the American people have every reason to expect that the VA and other government agencies would be unswerving in their devotion to the care and well-being of the men and women who have served in the nation's wars, especially those who have been wounded in combat.

**But with numbing regularity over the past few years, the public has heard tales that demonstrate that America's veterans are being ill-served by many of those whose task it is to help them.**

**Article continues below:**

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**It was just a year ago that the Washington Post uncovered the shabby conditions and inadequate treatment wounded combat veterans were receiving at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington.**

**In February 2007, the Post reported on the dilapidated buildings, overworked and overextended staff and inadequate funding that plagued what should have been the crown jewel of the military's medical system.**

**The Post reported one veteran as saying: "We've done our duty. We fought the war. We came home wounded. Fine. But whoever the people are back here who are supposed to give us the easy transition should be doing it." Marine Sgt. Ryan Groves, 26, an amputee who lived at Walter Reed for 16 months, went on to tell the newspaper, "We don't know what to do. The people who are supposed to know don't have the answers. It's a nonstop process of stalling."**

**The Post's reporting caused a scandal and prompted congressional hearings and promises of quick action to remedy the situation. But recently reports have surfaced that care, both physical and mental, is still inadequate - not just at Walter Reed, but across the nation.**

**According to some studies, up to 30 percent of those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are believed to suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, often requiring some mental health intervention. The suicide rate for Army veterans is above 17 percent per 100,000 people, the highest percentage in 26 years of record keeping.**

**Just this week, in Attleboro, a homeless Army reservist, who reportedly served tours of duty in Bosnia and Iraq, was arrested and jailed without bail on charges he broke into a vacant factory building, where he started a small fire, evidently in an effort to stay**

warm.

And as America's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq enter their seventh years, the number of homeless veterans is growing. There are 336,000 veterans of all wars in the United States who were homeless at some point in 2006, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

How did America come to fall so far short of its promises to those who volunteered to serve in its armed forces?

There are a number of reasons.

One is that no one in the administration that planned our current military involvement expected it to last as long as it has or to produce the number of casualties that it did.

Another is that in an administration that has made tax cuts a mantra, it is easy to squeeze dollars from programs - such as care for wounded veterans - that are out of the public eye.

But the neglect of those who have served their country honorably cannot be excused.

If the American government and the American people continue to break faith with the young men and women who have sworn to defend them - and who rightfully expect that the nation will help them when they return wounded in mind or in body- then we can't be surprised when, if we call on them to serve in the future, no one responds.

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posted by **Larry Scott**  
Founder and Editor  
VA Watchdog dot Org

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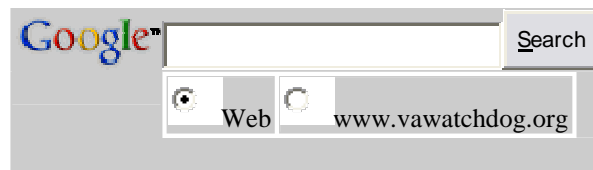
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