

AMERICAN LEGION PREAMBLE

For God and Country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

The Definition of "Veteran"

A veteran - whether active duty, retired, national guard or reserve - is someone who, at one point in his/her life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States of America", for an amount of "up to and including my life." That is honor, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it. -- Author Unknown

American Legion - Post 4
P. O. Box 14
Pocatello, ID 83204-0014

JANUARY 2008

**HAPPY NEW
YEAR**

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. POSTAGE
Pocatello, ID 83201
Permit No. 100

January 2008

**American Legion Post 4
P. O. Box 14
Pocatello, ID 83204-0014
<http://www.americanlegionpost4.com>**

Dear Post 4 Legionnaire:

I'd like to thank all the members of Post 4 for all the hard work they've done in the past year. We could NOT have accomplished anything without the dedication and hard work of so many of our members. There are so many people to thank that it's impossible to list them all here in the newsletter. And I'd like to thank in advance, all those same members and a lot more (!!) who will continue to turn out assure the success of Post 4 in 2008. We can only do our work for the veterans in our Post and in the area if we got enough help to do all of the things that the Legion provides to the veteran community.

And it's renewal time again, and if you haven't paid your 2008 dues by January 31st your membership will lapse in the American Legion, and after that day your free insurance will lapse also. We sent out a reminder letter to all those who haven't paid their annual dues two weeks ago, so please remember that the Legion does so much important work in the community and we need your support - and paid membership to do that.

**Mike S. Schow
Commander, Post 4**

The mid-Winter conference in Boise is coming up in January. Call the Commander for information and if you want to go. There will be a big baseball meeting and also Boy's State. Any member can go.

There WILL BE a Super Bowl Party at the Memorial Building held, amazing enough, on Super Bowl Sunday, February 3. The Post will provide meat for this gala event, your pot luck for the rest of it. Large projection TV, and two score pool boards - 100 spots; one for \$1, one for \$5 per square. We'll have the boards available before the game so you don't have to be present to win.

A reminder for all new or reinstated members of the Legion. If you were a member previously and let your membership lapse, your FREE insurance lapses immediately, and you have to reapply for the insurance now as a "new" or "reinstated" member. All members should check their records to see if they've signed up for this FREE insurance. If in doubt, reapply and they'll tell you if you're already signed up.

You'll be getting another phone call from the Post next Monday, Jan 7th to remind you about the Wednesday meeting. We're doing this to encourage members to come to the meetings. It'll come with the local caller id and phone number for Al Gibson, Post Adjutant. Please don't call to ask what the message was about!! We'll also use this phone message system to pass on other hot news items that pass across our desks that pertain directly to Post 4 members.

American Legion Post 4 Officers

Commander - Mike Schow 234-4914
1st Vice Commander - Winford Lomon 232-8919
2nd Vice Commander - Jim Keezer 232-4821
3rd Vice Commander - John Rogers 232-4843
Chaplain - Dave DeGarlis 238-1247
Sergeant At Arms - Bob Holden 406-7113
Adjutant - Al Gibson 201-0539
Newsletter - Al Gibson
Service Officer - Open
Treasurer - Mike Schow
Sons of the American Legion - Bob Holden
40&8 Voiture 451 Chef de Gare - Jim Keezer

American Legion Riders Officers

Director Frank Smith 317-1424
Ass't Director John White 681-0198
Secretary Al Gibson 201-0539
Treasurer Al Gibson
Historian Tom Janson 226-6653
Sergeant At Arms Bill Head 238-1467
Membership Wade Beery 223-6228
POW/MIA Liaison Phil Meek 241-3349
Purchasing Agent Jim Humble 237-0690
Road Captain Bill Head

EMAIL NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

TO; algibson912@hotmail.com

Meetings for Service Organizations

(unless noted, meetings are at the Memorial Building)
1st Mon. **American Legion 40&8**, 7 PM
1st Thurs. **Fleet Reserve Assoc.** 7 PM
2nd Mon. **Purple Heart 1PM / VVA** 7 PM
2nd Wed. **American Legion** 7 PM
2nd Thurs. **NCOA** 6:30 PM
2nd Fri. **MAC** 11:30 AM
3rd Mon. **BCVMA** 7 PM
3rd Wed. **VFW & Auxiliary** 7 PM
3rd Fri. **POW/MIA** 7 PM, Red Lion Inn
4th Wed. **MCL Det. 698** 7 PM
4th Thurs. **DAV** 6:30 PM
Last Mon. **American Legion Auxiliary** 4 PM

melissah@co.bannock.id.us for MAC info
DAV Van Schedule: Call 208-221-0362

American Legion Internet Addresses

American Legion Post 4, Pocatello, ID
<http://www.americanlegionpost4.com>

American Legion Riders, Post 4, Pocatello, ID
<http://www.idaholegionriders.com>

American Legion, Idaho State, Boise, ID
<http://idlegion.home.mindspring.com>

American Legion, National
<http://www.legion.org>

VA Contact Numbers

Bannock County Vet Svcs. Melissa J. Hartman
Courthouse Annex Cnty. Vet. Svcs. Coord
130 N. 6th, Pocatello 83201 Ph. 236-7411
melissah @co.bannock.id.us

Idaho Div. of Vet. Svcs. Deborah A. Harmon
Office of Veterans Advocacy SE Idaho Veterans
Idaho State Veterans Home Service Officer
1957 Alvin Ricken Dr. 208-236-6358
Pocatello 83201

Poc. VA Outpatient Clinic 208-232-6214

Pocatello Vet Center [Counseling] 208-232-0316

We support the Yellow Ribbon campaign to recognize homecoming veterans. Contact John Rogers 232-4843

Dates Of Interest

Jan 9 - American Legion meeting, 7 PM Memorial Building

Jan 10 to 13 - Legion Mid-Winter Conference - Boise

Jan 19 - Legion Oratorical Contest - 7 PM

Feb 3 - Super Bowl Sunday - big party, big TV, big \$

Feb 9 - Ice Fishing Derby - Devil Creek Res

Mar 29 - District 6 meeting - Pocatello

SLC VA Hospital 800-613-4012
Boise VA Regional Office 800-827-1000

Veterans Affairs Phil Clifton
Vocational Rehabilitation 208-478-9866
800-509-8547

NOTE: This newsletter plus attachments containing more information for veterans can be received electronically or viewed on our Post 4 web site.

PAID UP FOR LIFE (PUFL) MEMBERSHIP COST:

Below is the Life Membership cost for American Legion Post 4. Find the column with your age, then go down to the cost. You'll never have to worry about another dues increase by enrolling for PUFL Membership. Full payment is not required, just 10% down which includes the 2007 dues, and the balance is paid over one year and is *interest free*. The table below is for the \$35 membership. Your age is on the top 2 lines, PUFL cost on the third.

NOTE: May 1st 2007 was the effective date for the new \$35 per year membership rate.

-24	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85+
\$35/yr	- 29	-34	-39	-44	-49	-54	-59	-64	-69	-74	-79	-84	
\$1219	1160	1095	1024	946	862	772	679	585	493	406	325	253	206

Membership Renewals: Membership renewals for 2008 have slowed down a bit now that we're all resting up from Summer and getting ready for Winter. Our recruiters have been doing a fine job in lining up new Legion members. There are still some Active Duty military who have not joined as yet. Please let them know that we have a "paid up" program for all those serving on Active Duty. **First year is FREE.** And for those of you who have **NOT** renewed as yet, **PLEASE SEND IN YOUR RENEWAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** or Santa might leave you a lump of coal in your old combat boot!

Newsletter Mailing: Sign up for the electronic newsletter by sending an email to "algibson912@hotmail.com". All newsletters may also be read on the Post 4 web site. We add several additional articles in the email and web site version of the newsletter. Good information on veteran's benefits and events taking place around the area.

New Items on EBay: This is a fund-raiser, which should be convenient for everyone. What would you like to see available on EBay? The web address is "<http://stores.ebay.com/americanlegionpost4>" or you can link to it from our web page.

Attendance Drawing: The drawing for the \$20 dinner prize is held at the end of each monthly meeting. You must attend to be eligible, and the entry form has been made a part of the Monthly Minutes distributed at each meeting, so you don't have to bring your newsletter and cut it up.

DAV Van: If you must miss you appointment on the van, contact the DAV scheduler as soon as possible so that the seat may be filled by another veteran needing transportation. **Very Important.**

American Legion Riders;

You must be a member of the American Legion to join the Riders, and you get a FREE email address of "(your name)@idaholegionriders.com".

Ice Fishing Derby; This is a **Definite "Maybe" Event** depending on sign-ups and the weather. We're having an Ice Fishing Derby at **Devil Creek Reservoir** down near Malad Pass on Saturday, February 9th from 9 AM to 2 PM. The entire family is invited to this spectacular First-Ever Legion event. Sign-ups are in January at the Memorial Building. Meats provided by the Legion. Bring your own drinks. We'll have hamburgers, hot-dogs, etc. Pot Luck for your own extra food. Cost is \$10 per family. Contact Robert Dawson for details.

District 6 Meeting is on March 29th in Pocatello. Everyone in the District can attend. Ask District or Post officers for details

Legion Oratorical Contest: The Legion Oratorical Contest is being held at the Memorial Building on Jan 19 at 7 PM. This Oratorical Contest is one of the great events that are sponsored by the Legion. Volunteers are need to judge the contest. Contact Al Eveland for details

Texas Hold-Em Tournament; planning is in the works. Date and time is TBD.

Legion Mid-Winter Conference is being held in Boise at the Owyee Hotel on Jan 10 through 13. Everybody is welcome to attend the Conference. Call Mike Schow for details if you want to go.

Handicapped Boat Program (fishing trips) is alive and well. Veterans with prostheses or difficulty just getting around are the target audience for this program. If interested in this fantastic program to get our veterans out to fish and enjoy the outdoors, call Mike Schow or any Post Officer.

Final VA Funding Passed: Congress passed an historic funding bill that gives VA the largest increase in its history and fully meets the needs laid out by the VFW and the Independent Budget. The bill provides a total of \$43.1 billion in discretionary funding for VA, which is \$6.6 billion above the 2007 funding amount, and nearly \$4 billion above the president's budget request. The funding includes:

- \$37.2 billion for the Veterans Health Administration
- \$3.5 billion more than last year for medical services, which includes \$2.9 billion for mental healthcare, \$130 million for homeless veteran programs, and money to treat more than 260,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.
- \$1.1 billion for hospital construction and \$4.1 billion for medical facilities, which includes a \$530 million increase for maintenance and minor repairs.
- Funding to hire an additional 1,800 disability claims raters to help reduce the intolerable backlog of claims.
- \$2 billion, a \$752 million increase, to help VA Information Technology improve the medical records system to better interface with DOD systems as we work towards a seamless transition.

Task Force Wants TRICARE Fees Increased: The congressionally-chartered Task Force on the Future of Military Healthcare released its final report yesterday in the Pentagon, and among its many recommendations is one that would phase-in military TRICARE enrollment fee and deductible increases for retirees under 65. The rationale given for the recommendation was that usage fees have not risen in 10 years, whereas DOD healthcare costs have risen substantially, from \$19 billion in 2001 to \$39 billion this year. The recommended increases would be based on the retiree's retirement pay and phased in over the next four years. The Task Force said the increases, which would be indexed, would help stabilize the healthcare system for current and future users.

Congress has purged TRICARE increase language from the past two defense budgets, but if somehow this latest proposal should go through, those in the highest retiree income bracket (\$40,000 or more a year in retirement pay) could see annual TRICARE Prime enrollment fees rise by approximately \$300 annually for four consecutive years, while those in the lowest bracket (\$19,999 or less) would experience \$100 annual increases. TRICARE for Life participants and those Medicare-eligible would also be subjected to a \$10 monthly enrollment fee. Similar increases were recommended for generic and brand name prescription copayments, as well.

Local Business Supporters In Pocatello;

Eclipse Printing at 156 S. 3rd Ave. will provide business cards for Legion members at \$35 for 500.

Grandpa's Coffee Shop at 3304 Poleline Rd. for coffee, food, conversations. Smokers welcome.

Inkjet Express at 3318 Poleline Rd. for supplies and printer cartridge refills.

Jones Guns & Antiques at 546 S. Main St. for military collectibles, uniforms, firearms, and antiques.

Homeless veteran status

I wanted to give you all an update on the status of the Veteran we sent an emergency email request for donations. As of today he is no longer homeless! He has finished the process and a vacancy has come up at the St. Anthony apartments and he has a move in date of January 8th! Thanks to all of you wonderful folks who made donations and for your thoughts and prayers for this very appreciative Veteran! He wants everyone to know how much he appreciates it and could never say thank you enough. If you have any questions please contact me, Melissa Hartman 236-7411. You guys never seem to fail to impress me with your giving nature!

AMERICAN LEGION PROGRAMS AND ASSOCIATED VETERAN PROGRAMS

Here's a list of just a few of the programs that Pocatello American Legion Post 4 is promoting and participating in Pocatello and Bannock County:

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- § Fishing Derby, two per year. Middle of June and last of August
- § Toys for Tots, November and December. The American Legion assists the USMC Reserves
- § Temporary Financial Assistance (Families with Children) any time of the year needing help
- § Baseball (Four Teams)
- § Boy's State (13 Boys in 2007)
- § Boy Scouts (Eagle Venture 148 Local)
- § Boy Scouts Iraq (Eagles, Lighting, Tiger) thru National Guard
- § Junior Shooting Team
- § Oratorical Program (\$160,000 Plus Scholarships) Post to National
- § R.O.T.C Awards (ISU, BYU Idaho)
- § School Awards All high schools in Pocatello
- § American Legion Scholarships For Idaho High School Senior

VETERANS PROGRAMS

- § Veterans Rehabilitation
- § Veterans Assistance Financial
- § Veterans Educational Assistance
- § Food Convoy (3 Idaho State Veterans Homes) November each year
- § Idaho State Veterans Homes (Pocatello, Boise, Lewiston) VAR and VAVS support for each
- § Idaho State Cemetery (Boise) Project now to find land and put Cemetery here in SE Idaho
- § Blood Donor Program in December with POW/MIA blood drive
- § Medical Assistance For Veterans in Need
- § Financial support for all veterans
- § Support Active Duty Soldiers, Reserve and National Guard, or any branch of service
- § Community Support
- § Service Office in the County, 2 State Service officers at the Veterans. Home
- § Veterans Day Program each 11th of November
- § Memorial Day Program in May of each year
- § Bingo, Dances, American Legion Birthday Party and other social events

(all meeting minutes are unofficial until approved at the Post meeting)

**The American Legion
Pocatello Post 4
Meeting Minutes For December 12, 2007**

NO MEETING AT THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL



algibson912@hotmail.com

Printed: Saturday Dec. 29, 2007, 6:28 PM

January 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
	4:00 PM American Legion Aux	12:00 AM New Years Day		7:00 PM Fleet Reserve		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	7:00 PM 40 & 8		7:00 PM American Legion	6:30 PM NCOA	11:30 AM MAC	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	1:00 PM Purple Heart 7:00 PM VVA		7:00 PM VFW & Aux		7:00 PM POW/MIA (Red Lion)	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	7:00 PM BCVMA		7:00 PM Marine Corps League	6:30 PM DAV		
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
	4:00 PM American Legion Aux					

Subject: Fw: 1955

A crusty old Marine Sergeant Major found himself at a gala event hosted by a local liberal arts college. There was no shortage of extremely young, idealistic ladies in attendance, one of whom approached the Sergeant Major for conversation.

"Excuse me, Sergeant Major, but you seem to be a very serious man. Is something bothering you?"

"Negative, ma'am. Just serious by nature."

The young lady looked at his awards and decorations and said, "It looks like you have seen a lot of action."

"Yes, ma'am, a lot of action."

The young lady, tiring of trying to start up a conversation, said, "You know, you should lighten up a little. Relax and enjoy yourself."

The Sergeant Major just stared at her in his serious manner.

Finally the young lady said, "You know, I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but when is the last time you had sex?"

"1955, ma'am."

"Well, there you are.. You really need to chill out and quit taking everything so seriously! I mean, no sex since 1955!"

She took his hand and led him to a private room where she proceeded to "relax" him several times.

Afterwards, panting for breath, she leaned against his bare chest and said, "Wow, you sure didn't forget much since 1955!"

The Sergeant Major, glancing at his watch, said in his matter-of-fact voice, "I hope not, it's only 2130 now."

(Don't ya love military time)

CURRENT NEWS

EARLY BIRD



December 26, 2007

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Story numbers indicate order of appearance only.

IRAQ

1. **Shiite Contest Sharpens In Iraq**
(*Washington Post*)....Sudarsan Raghavan
...The arrests of Sadr's loyalists are part of a broader power struggle between the two most powerful Shiite factions seeking to lead Iraq: the Sadrists, who are pushing for U.S. troops to withdraw, and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the Bush administration's main Shiite ally.
2. **White House Hopeful For Iraq Progress**
(*Washington Times*)....Jon Ward
The Bush administration is optimistic the Iraqi government will take an important step toward political reconciliation by passing at least one major law before the next progress report in March from the top U.S. general and U.S. ambassador in Iraq.
3. **U.S. Presses For Iraqi Self-Sufficiency**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Tina Susman
Call it transitioning or weaning, it means the same thing: nudging officials to turn to the country's own central government.
4. **U.S. Officials Differ Over Iran**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Yochi J. Dreazen and Jay Solomon
The Pentagon and State Department, long divided over the conduct of the Iraq war and reconstruction there, have a new point of contention: Iran, and how much credit it deserves for recent security improvements in Iraq.
5. **Sunnis Fighting Al Qaeda Must Be Rewarded, General Says**
(*Boston Globe*)....Patrick Quinn, Associated Press
A top US commander warned yesterday that Sunnis who fight Al Qaeda in Iraq must be rewarded and recognized as legitimate members of Iraqi society - or else the hard-fought security gains of the past six months could be lost.
6. **24 Iraqis Killed In Two Suicide Attacks**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Alexandra Zavis
Bombings in Baiji and Baqubah target security forces and volunteers. Turkey launches more airstrikes in the north.
7. **Two Bombings Kill At Least 26 In N. Iraq**
(*Washington Post*)....Joshua Partlow
...Despite the recent attacks -- and a brazen abduction near Baqubah on Monday -- officials in both provinces said overall security has improved in the past year.
8. **Video Shows Car Carrying 6 Al Qaeda Leaders Blown Up By U.S. Helicopter**
(*New York Daily News*)....Tamer el-Ghobashy
A grainy videotape released Tuesday shows a carload of important Al Qaeda terrorists in Iraq being blown up by missiles from a U.S. Army chopper, military officials said.

9. **Turkey Says Its Raids In Iraq Killed 150 Rebels**
(*New York Times*)....Sebnem Arsu and Stephen Farrell
Turkish airstrikes on Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq have killed more than 150 rebels and hit more than 200 targets in recent days, the Turkish military said Tuesday, countering Kurdish claims that only a handful of people were killed in the attacks.
10. **Berkley Upbeat About Progress In Iraq**
(*Las Vegas Review-Journal*)....Steve Tetreault
Visiting Iraq for the first time, Rep. Shelley Berkley said Monday the U.S. military and Iraqi police have made more progress than she expected in quelling violence that had beset portions of the country.
11. **Muslims Join Christians For Mass**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Usama Redha and Kimi Yoshino
...But inside, hundreds of Iraqi worshipers -- Christians and Muslims -- were crammed into the overflowing Chaldean Catholic church Tuesday, celebrating the holiday and the fact that they felt safe enough to venture out of their homes to attend Christmas Mass.
12. **Troops, Iraqis Make The Best Of Christmas**
(*Miami Herald*)....Jamie Gumbrecht and Laith Hammoudi, McClatchy News Service
In Iraq, the ghosts of Christmas past haunted Iraqis and U.S. soldiers alike, but celebrations were as good as could be.

POLL

13. **Military Family Members Share Public's Division On Iraq War, Bush**
(*USA Today*)....Gregg Zoroya
Close family members of U.S. troops are split on whether the Iraq invasion was a mistake, and 55% disapprove of President Bush's job performance, according to USA TODAY/Gallup Polls focusing on immediate relatives of servicemembers.

WHITE HOUSE

14. **Bush Calls To Thank 10 Service Members**
(*Los Angeles Times*)....Maura Reynolds
President Bush on Monday called 10 members of the U.S. military stationed in Iraq and elsewhere around the world to thank them for serving their country and spending the holidays away from their families.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

15. **Prospects Fade For Pentagon Satellite Plan**
(*Wall Street Journal*)....Andy Pasztor
When the U.S. space agency picked Boeing Co. recently to build as much as \$1.2 billion of satellites, analysts and company officials predicted it would improve Boeing's chances of winning larger, higher-profile military-satellite contracts in coming months. But the survival of the Pentagon's largest satellite-communications program now appears increasingly in doubt.

ARMY

16. **Army Eyes Isolated Nuclear Site In S.C. For Battle Exercises**
(*USA Today*)....Associated Press
The military is looking for a few good acres — very dark ones.
17. **Driver Rams Into Home**
(*New York Times*)....Associated Press
A man crashed his car into the secretary of the Army's kitchen over the weekend here and then shot himself to death a short time later. The secretary, Pete Geren, said Tuesday that he did not know the man, who lived a block away.
18. **Father's Leave Is Extended**
(*Chicago Tribune*)....James Janega

As child lay in ICU, Army initially told GI to return to duty.

MARINE CORPS

19. **Uniting Wounded Warriors And Their Families**
(San Diego Union-Tribune)....Linda McIntosh
 While their husbands were deployed, several Marine wives at Camp Pendleton came up with an idea to help wounded Marines coming back from Iraq.

NAVY

20. **Navy Rescues 7 Mariners On Raft In Arabian Gulf**
(Norfolk Virginian-Pilot)....Steve Stone
 Seven mariners who had been adrift in a raft for two days in the Arabian Gulf after their small boat broke apart in rough seas were rescued Sunday by U.S. Navy ships.

RUSSIA

21. **Russia: Ballistic Missile Test-Fired**
(New York Times)....Reuters
 A Russian submarine in the Barents Sea successfully test-fired a new ballistic missile, hitting a target on the Kamchatka Peninsula on Russia's Pacific coast minutes later, the Defense Ministry said.

AFGHANISTAN

22. **Afghan Rebels' Arms Suppliers Assailed**
(Washington Times)....Betsy Pisik
 Canadian Defense Minister Peter Mackay last night accused Pakistan and Iran of supplying weapons to insurgents, only half an hour before a rocket disrupted his Christmas game of field hockey with the troops here.
23. **Afghanistan To Expel 2 Envoys, Citing Threats To Its Security**
(New York Times)....Agence France-Presse
 Afghanistan has ordered a high-level European Union official and a United Nations staff member to leave the country, accusing them of threatening national security, government and diplomatic officials said Tuesday.
24. **Britain In Secret Talks With The Taliban**
(London Daily Telegraph)....Thomas Harding and Tom Coghlan
 ...It is thought that the Americans were extremely unhappy with the news becoming public that an ally was negotiating with terrorists who supported the September 11 attackers.

ASIA/PACIFIC

25. **Sino-Indian Army Exercises Bring Two Asian Powers Closer**
(Christian Science Monitor)....Mark Sappenfield and Anuj Chopra
 Forty-five years after a border war, the two nations begin to collaborate on security.
26. **Heir To North Korea's Helm Not Apparent, Analysts Say**
(USA Today)....Paul Wiseman
 Among Kim Jong Il's three sons, none seems clear choice to 'win hearts of people.'
27. **Guam's About-Face: Camacho Changes Tune Regarding Buildup**
(Pacific Daily News (Guam))....Steve Limtiaco
 ...Lamorena said GovGuam currently is planning for the most military impact -- additional strains on infrastructure and government services without the funding to pay for it -- but those plans will be adjusted as the military's plans for Guam are clarified next year.

TECHNOLOGY

28. **Make A Mistake, And This Mannequin Dies In Battle**
(*Boston Globe*)...Colin Nickerson
Dr. Steve Dawson and his team are creating a dummy that will die if you don't treat it right.
29. **Clothing Contains Tourniquets For Those Going In Harm's Way**
(*Baltimore Sun*)...Associated Press
...Once he returned to the United States, Rose approached BlackHawk, a provider of military and law enforcement gear, with an idea to create clothes with built-in tourniquets. The system being tested for use in military uniforms, called Warrior Wear, has eight tourniquets - two in each sleeve and pant leg.

BUSINESS

30. **Raytheon: Army Aware Of Missile's Flaw**
(*Boston Globe*)...Ross Kerber
Army officials were aware that the Raytheon-built Patriot air-defense system had difficulty distinguishing between friendly and enemy aircraft but deployed the missiles in the Iraq war after deciding the system was needed to protect troops, a Raytheon Co. executive stated in a recent legal filing.
31. **Pentagon Backs Troubled Presidential Copter Program**
(*Fort Worth Star Telegram*)...Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg News
The Pentagon has rejected a recommendation by the Navy to delay the purchase and operation of a new presidential helicopter built by a team led by Lockheed Martin, according to a budget document.
32. **Armored Vehicle Maker Shuts Down**
(*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*)...Unattributed
A company that makes armored military vehicles has fired most of its employees and shut down permanently, according to a report posted online Monday.

OPINION

33. **Putin's Cold War**
(*Wall Street Journal*)...Leon Aron
...The formerly diverse bilateral U.S.-Russian agenda -- energy security, nuclear nonproliferation, the global war on terrorism, the containment of a resurgent, authoritarian China, Russia's integration in the global economy -- has been systematically whittled down by Moscow to where it was in the Soviet days and where the Kremlin now wants it: arms control.
34. **A Chance To Rein In North Korea**
(*Washington Post*)...Nicholas Eberstadt
...The resounding defeat of the candidates who favored more of Seoul's all-carrot, no-stick approach to Kim Jong Il presents Washington with a horizon of new possibilities for reining in Asia's most troublesome dictator. The question now is whether the Bush foreign policy team will be adept enough to seize this opportunity.
35. **Iraqis Playing Key Role In Country's Stabilization**
(*Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)*)...Joseph Galloway
...But the truth is that much of this reduction in violence is, like the violence itself, entirely homegrown and thus resistant to the analysis and understanding of foreigners.

CORRECTIONS

36. **Correction**
(*Christian Science Monitor*)...Christian Science Monitor
A story last week about two US-run detention facilities in Iraq (Dec. 20, page 1) contained two errors.

Washington Post
December 26, 2007
Pg. 1

1. Shiite Contest Sharpens In Iraq

Sadr and U.S. Ally Refocus on South

By Sudarsan Raghavan,
Washington Post Foreign
Service

KARBALA, Iraq -- Posted at the door of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's office recently, a flier denounced the arrests of his followers. Up and down the barricaded street, soldiers and policemen loyal to his Shiite rivals stood sentry, some in tan armored personnel carriers, questioning anyone they suspected of links to the populist cleric.

Inside the shuttered office, five guards spoke frankly of their sense of vulnerability and weakness. Once in control of the streets of this southern city of holy sites, the Sadrists said they have been chased underground, their rivals at their heels.

The arrests of Sadr's loyalists are part of a broader power struggle between the two most powerful Shiite factions seeking to lead Iraq: the Sadrists, who are pushing for U.S. troops to withdraw, and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the Bush administration's main Shiite ally. Given the nation's majority-Shiite population, this intensifying confrontation could play a major role in deciding Iraq's future.

This year's U.S. military offensive and dramatic shifts in tactics by both Sunni and Shiite groups are redrawing the balance of power across Iraq. With less violence between Sunnis and Shiites, festering struggles within each community may come to define the nature of the conflict. In the Shiite-dominated south, Sadr's main Shiite rivals are taking advantage of the surge in U.S. troops, as well as Sadr's imposition of a freeze on operations by his Mahdi Army

militia, to make political gains.

"They are all gathering against us," said Ayad Abu Ali, a wiry, broad-shouldered militia guard who had sent his family into hiding and now hardly leaves the office.

U.S. forces have arrested hundreds of Mahdi Army militia members in Baghdad, creating voids in the leadership. This has emboldened Iraq's mostly Shiite security forces, loyal to the Supreme Council and other political parties, to reach for power in the south. In cities such as Karbala, Diwaniyah and, most recently, Hilla, scores of Sadr's followers are routinely being detained.

"If this American pressure did not exist on the Mahdi Army in Baghdad, of course Iraqi security forces would not be able to make these arrests in the southern provinces," said Abdul Hadi al-Mohammadawi, a cleric who heads Sadr's operation in Karbala. "And if the freeze did not exist, this would not be happening."

Struggle in the South

In the southern holy city of Najaf, pilgrims sat against a wall of the Imam Ali shrine, one of Shiite Islam's most sacred sites. On the ornate facade is a white patch in the shape of the face of Ayatollah Mohammed Bakir Hakim. Assassinated by a car bomb in August 2003, Hakim was the leader of the Supreme Council. His younger brother, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, one of Iraq's most powerful politicians, now heads the party.

Six months ago, Supreme Council loyalists sought to create a portrait of the elder Hakim in brickwork on the shrine's facade. But Sadr's followers took to the streets and stopped them from finishing the project.

"Each side is determined to be in control of the south," said Mohammed Jassim, a prominent tribal leader in Diwaniyah province.

The competition has its origins in the days when the fathers of Hakim and Sadr,

both preeminent ayatollahs, fought to lead Iraq's Shiites. Under Saddam Hussein, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim spent years in exile in Iran. Sadr remained in Iraq, bolstering his street credentials. After the U.S. invasion in 2003, Hakim embraced the Americans, while Sadr went to war against them, launching two major uprisings in Najaf in 2004.

Today, their struggle is multidimensional, playing out along lines of personality, class and ideology. The contest is a street fight over turf, a tug of war over oil revenues and a battle for control of the shrines. Sadr's militia has targeted Hakim's party offices and fought his movement's armed wing, the Badr Organization. Both militias are widely believed to have operated death squads targeting each other and Sunnis.

The fight is also political; both parties control 30 seats in Iraq's parliament. Last year, Sadr backed Nouri al-Maliki for prime minister, largely to prevent Hakim's candidate from gaining office. By the end of 2006, the Bush administration and Hakim had grown closer, to counter Sadr's growing street power.

In Najaf, a city governed by Hakim's party, posters of Sadr and his father, Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq Sadr, who was assassinated by Hussein's men in 1999, have mushroomed defiantly on the streets. Hakim's portrait, usually paired with a portrait of Iraq's paramount Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, hangs in many police and government offices.

This year, Sadr and Hakim have sought to position themselves at the center of Iraq's ideological sphere. To bolster his nationalist credentials, Sadr pulled his loyalists from Iraq's factionalized government and tacitly approved the U.S. surge offensive. Hakim removed the word "revolution" from the name of his political party, suggesting that it was no

longer an armed opposition group.

"It was based on reality, and not a maneuver," said Sadr al-Din al-Qubanchi, a turbaned cleric who heads the Supreme Council in Najaf. "Who were we going to revolt against? We are leading the political process."

The change was also widely seen as an attempt by the Supreme Council to distance itself from Iran's theocratic government, which uses similar slogans.

A referendum on creating an autonomous Shiite region of nine provinces is scheduled for April, mandated by Iraq's constitution, although political deadlines in Iraq are seldom met. The Supreme Council wants a mini-Shiite state, but opponents such as Sadr, who views himself as an Iraqi nationalist, fear it will lead to a breakup of the country.

"It is the war of the wills," said Hazim al-Araji, a senior Sadr official in Najaf. "Everyone is trying to improve their position for the sake of winning the elections. Perhaps these will take place next year, so they want to eliminate the Sadr trend."

"That is as clear to me as the sun at midday."

Clashes and a Freeze

On a recent day, scores of black-cloaked women loyal to Sadr flowed into the city's center. They clutched large white banners protesting the arrests of their husbands and sons -- Sadr's foot soldiers. Some of the women came from Diwaniyah, most from Karbala. They wailed, and they chanted: "Our Shia government! Release our sons! Release our husbands!"

Twenty minutes later, police loyal to the Badr Organization arrived and broke up the protest, which had been coordinated by Sadr's movement.

The arrests of Sadr's loyalists began after fierce street battles in late August around two holy shrines in Karbala. The fighting pitted

Mahdi Army gunmen against guards believed to be loyal to the Badr Organization. More than 50 people were killed, making it one of the deadliest days of Shiite-on-Shiite violence since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

Karbala's police chief blamed the Mahdi Army for firing rocket-propelled grenades and guns from rooftops toward thousands of pilgrims gathered between the Imam Hussein and Imam Abbas shrines. An Iraqi government committee, headed by independent lawmaker Mithal Alousi, also found the militia largely responsible, although the committee has not completed its investigation. Sadr officials have denied the allegations.

The clashes prompted Sadr to impose the freeze on his militia's operations. He also signed a peace agreement with Hakim, although tensions remain high.

In Karbala alone, Iraqi security forces have detained more than 400 of Sadr's loyalists, including commanders and fighters. In contrast to Najaf, once-pervasive images of Sadr and his father have all but disappeared from many neighborhoods.

"Now there is no Sadr trend in Karbala, except us," said Ayad Abu Ali, the guard at the Sadr office. "Everyone has fled."

The Supreme Council, he said, "dominates in Karbala," but the soldiers on his street were loyal to the Dawa party, led by Maliki. Under heavy U.S. pressure, Maliki distanced himself this year from his political benefactor, Sadr, and shifted closer to Hakim. The Dawa party is also competing with Sadr and Hakim to guide the nation's Shiites, although it lacks a militia and a strong popular base.

Senior Supreme Council leaders and Dawa party officials denied that the arrests of Sadr's followers were politically motivated. "There's

no truth to this," the Supreme Council's Qubanchi said.

Aqeel al-Khazaly, Karbala's governor and a Dawa member, said that of the 400 arrested, 120 were convicted by a court of participating in a militia-related attack and an additional 120 were released. "We're not targeting a political party by itself," he said.

Reaching Out

In recent weeks, sunflower-yellow posters have surfaced around Karbala and Najaf advertising a contest for the best Koranic handwriting.

"Fourteen thousand people have entered so far," said a smiling Hassan al-Hakim, the general supervisor of the Shahid al-Mihrab Foundation and a nephew of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim.

Seeking to change the image of the Supreme Council, the foundation has spent millions on building mosques and elementary schools, caring for orphans and providing aid to 65,000 poor or displaced families. It has also funded trips to Iran for Shiite pilgrims and bankrolled one of Iraq's largest mass weddings, with more than 1,000 couples each receiving as much as \$800 cash, a bed, new clothing and household goods.

"We are trying to present Iraq with a moderate, middle vision," said Hassan al-Hakim, who wore gray and black clerical robes like his uncle. "We respect the elites, but we want to reach everyone."

That could prove difficult. The Supreme Council's links to both Iran and the Americans have eroded popular support. Voted into the government as part of the ruling Shiite alliance in 2005, the movement is also blamed for not improving basic services or boosting the economy. Even members of the Shiite business elite, core Hakim supporters, are grumbling.

"We elected Abdul Aziz al-Hakim because he was one of us," said Abu Ali, a merchant near the Imam Ali shrine who asked that his

nickname be used. "But has his coalition done anything for the people?"

Hakim is battling lung cancer, although he has appeared healthier in recent weeks. His successor remains unknown.

By reaching out to the urban underclasses, the Supreme Council is wooing Sadr's core constituency. For years, the Sadrist have brought social services to the Shiite masses.

Despite the arrests, Sadr's close aides say the cleric will maintain the freeze on his militia's operations. It is in part a pragmatic decision: The U.S. and Iraqi raids have weakened his movement. But Sadr is also trying to exert control over his unruly, decentralized militia, parts of which still commit atrocities.

"We are rebuilding the Mahdi Army," said Salah al-Obaidi, Sadr's chief spokesman in Najaf. "We want them to be well disciplined, well educated."

If all goes well, Sadr might extend the freeze, scheduled to end in February, Obaidi added. That could bolster the young cleric's popularity, especially during the April referendum, if it takes place. U.S. military commanders are now publicly commending Sadr for the freeze.

"He wants to be more like his father, who was a religious leader, and to have influence on the government in a peaceful way," said Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the second-ranking U.S. commander in Iraq.

Sadr's top aides have vowed to win their bid to lead Iraq's Shiites. The Supreme Council "is claiming they are our biggest rival, but in fact they have no popularity in the south," said Mohammadawi, Sadr's representative in Karbala. "They are trying to seize power in every way, but they can't. They will fail."

December 26, 2007

Pg. 1

2. White House Hopeful For Iraq Progress

Bush counts on Baghdad to pass laws early in 2008

By Jon Ward, The Washington Times

The Bush administration is optimistic the Iraqi government will take an important step toward political reconciliation by passing at least one major law before the next progress report in March from the top U.S. general and U.S. ambassador in Iraq.

"I think you'll see, particularly over the next 90 days, some of the laws at the national level begin to pass," said Brett McGurk, senior director for Iraq and Afghanistan at the White House.

Mr. McGurk said a law allowing former Ba'ath Party officials to return to government jobs will pass, and another law that would shift power away from the central government and toward provincial councils may as well.

"The de-Ba'athification reform law is moving its way through the parliamentary process, which is very complicated," he said. "It's had its second reading. It needs one more. I think we'll see that law pass."

The provincial powers law, Mr. McGurk said, faces some opposition from Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and prominent cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Both men are Shi'ites who control blocs within the Iraqi parliament.

A chief roadblock to national reconciliation is tension between Shi'ites and Sunnis. The more-populous Shi'ites constituted the political minority under former dictator Saddam Hussein, a Sunni Arab whose Ba'ath Party dominated government and often mistreated Shi'ites.

Shi'ites now hold the controlling portion of the central government and have

been loath to make concessions to Sunnis.

But a senior administration official predicted Mr. al-Maliki eventually will go along with the majority in the parliament on the provincial powers law, saying, "There is more of a consensus there on this issue than I had expected."

And Sheik al-Sadr and his followers, the official said, are "becoming increasingly irrelevant."

The president's surge of 30,000 U.S. troops to Iraq over the past year has produced clear security improvements. Civilian deaths, which hit a high of more than 3,000 in December 2006, were down to a little more than 500 last month.

Because of the dramatic security payoffs, criticism has shifted away from violence and toward the lack of quantifiable progress by Iraq's central government. Skeptics say that despite the security gains, the Iraqis have not capitalized on the "breathing space" created for them.

The Bush administration has conceded that the political situation is not ideal.

Mary Beth Long, the president's nominee for assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, said last week that she would give the al-Maliki government a failing grade for its performance so far.

"The national government chaired by Prime Minister Maliki has not performed in an exemplary manner by passing key legislative reform," she told the Senate Armed Services Committee during a confirmation hearing.

President Bush gave a more upbeat assessment at his year-end press conference, pointing to informal sharing of oil revenues with provincial governments and progress on the budget. The president also indicated that the de-Ba'athification law might soon pass.

"Are we satisfied with the progress in Baghdad? No. But

to say nothing is happening is just simply not the case," he said.

Now, the president's surge has ended, and U.S. troops are beginning to leave Iraq. By March, the U.S. military plans to be at pre-surge strength, with about 130,000 troops on the ground.

At that time, Gen. David H. Petraeus, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan C. Crocker will report to Congress on how Iraq is doing in meeting benchmarks.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said in September that U.S. troops might draw down to 100,000 by the end of 2008, but has since retracted that number, saying that Gen. Petraeus will decide what happens beyond March.

"We obviously want to sustain the gains that we have already made," Mr. Gates said at a Pentagon press conference last week.

The United States runs the risk of seeing violence re-escalate as U.S. troops move out.

"When the surge ends and we lose the ability to sit on certain areas with extra forces, we could see a significant rebound in violence," said Wayne White, a former Iraq analyst for the State Department, now at the Middle East Institute.

And if no laws are passed by the Iraqi parliament by March, administration officials run the risk of facing a situation similar to last winter and spring, when Congress appeared poised to impose a deadline for withdrawal of U.S. troops.

One administration official said that public opinion polls are "irrelevant," but another acknowledged that public opinion on Iraq is the "center of gravity."

"The public opinion of what we need to do in Iraq matters. Not that we look at the polls on this, but the Congress matters. The Congress has to provide funds," the official

said.

Despite these risks, the White House is more optimistic about Iraq than at any time in recent memory.

"I am not Pollyannish about Iraq. We have had times in the past where it looked like we were on the right track," Mr. McGurk said. "This does feel different, though."

Los Angeles Times
December 26, 2007
Pg. 1

3. U.S. Presses For Iraqi Self-Sufficiency

Call it transitioning or weaning, it means the same thing: nudging officials to turn to the country's own central government.

By Tina Susman, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

SABA AL BOR, IRAQ — It started with a broken generator at a water pumping station. Local officials did what they usually do when an important piece of machinery needs repairs: They turned to the U.S. forces stationed in town.

But this time, the answer was "No." The time had come for officials here to rely on the central government in Baghdad for such things.

"It's a rather new concept, empowering local leaders to take charge of *their* leaders," said Maj. Randall Baucom of the 1st Brigade of the Army's 1st Cavalry Division, as he recalled the June generator incident. "But unless these projects are vested at the national level, you can build schools but there are no teachers. You can build clinics but there are no nurses."

U.S. officials call the process "transitioning." Others might call it weaning. Whatever the name, it means the same thing: nudging Iraqi officials to stop turning to U.S. forces for services and logistics such as fuel deliveries and clinic construction, and to begin working through the relevant ministries in Baghdad.

That's a tall order. Distrust

of Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's government runs deep, not only because of sectarian suspicions but because of its inability to pass major legislation and slowness in providing essential services such as electricity and potable water.

Government ministries also are too slow to spend money on capital projects, according to the latest quarterly report of the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress. Overall, ministries had spent only 36% of their capital budgets for 2007 as of Nov. 1, says the report, which came out this month. It cited lack of trained budget personnel, stringent and daunting anti-corruption laws and weaknesses in contracting procedures.

Some things have improved, but in the fifth year of the war, wariness remains.

"Iraqis know we don't really have a government. All we have is chess pieces," said Dr. Abbas Haider, who runs Saba al Bor's clinic.

The threadbare concrete structure stayed open through more than a year of mortar and rocket bombardments that all but emptied this town. With the situation calmer now, thousands of people are pouring back into Saba al Bor, and Haider is under pressure to keep his clinic open around the clock.

That means persuading the relevant ministries in Baghdad to provide doctors, nurses, equipment, medicines and security for the building.

On two recent mornings, the courtyard outside was crowded with women carrying coughing children. One woman got a prescription for asthma medication for her daughter, only to be told the medicine wasn't available at the clinic's pharmacy and should be bought on the black market.

"It'll cost twice as much!" she yelled angrily.

Haider said that two years ago, U.S. troops routinely

provided diesel, gasoline and batteries to his clinic and repaired ambulances.

"But they've been withdrawing," he said, adding that he understood the need to use his own government for help but did not relish the idea. "I expected 100%," he said of the Americans.

Those are the sorts of expectations U.S. officials need to reverse. With pressure in Washington to draw down U.S. troops and reduce spending on the war, they say change is inevitable. For one thing, money for U.S.-led projects won't last forever. A fund of nearly \$20 billion for major reconstruction and relief projects, approved by Congress in 2003, is nearly depleted and won't be replenished.

U.S. troops have at their disposal funds from the Commander's Emergency Response Program, which gives field commanders cash to cover small-scale projects such as road repairs, fuel purchases or school rehabilitations. But the program was never intended to be permanent, and the \$770 million budgeted for Iraq for the 2008 fiscal year is 20% less than the amount approved in 2007, said Maj. Joseph Price, the program coordinator for Iraq.

The situation has thrust U.S. officials into matchmaker roles as they try to accelerate the process of Iraqis taking charge. They orchestrate meetings between local and national leaders, urge them to talk, share a meal and trade phone numbers.

One such meeting took place last month in Saba al Bor, when officials from several Baghdad ministries, including health and education, were brought to meet leaders and tour the town. The needs and the impatience of local officials quickly became clear.

At the clinic, the head nurse cornered a Health Ministry inspector and bellowed at him to provide more staff and equipment. During a walk through town,

residents griped about a lack of drinking water.

Within weeks, both issues had been addressed because of the face-to-face encounters, U.S. and Iraqi officials said.

Nationwide, however, the needs are immense, and U.S. officials acknowledge that things move slowly when the central government is involved. Much of that is the legacy of Saddam Hussein's regime, which discouraged anyone but top-ranking Baath Party officials from making decisions. Provincial and local officials had no power to demand action by the national government and have had to learn to push for what they need.

"One has to be pretty sympathetic. They're basically building up these patterns of doing business and building budgets and interacting with the central government from scratch," said a U.S. reconstruction official in northern Iraq, who asked not to be identified by name.

Some local officials say sectarian interests in the Shiite-led government also slow progress. The Sunni headmaster at a school in Saba al Bor, Ali Aziz Sultan, said the Ministry of Education did not provide equal money or staff to schools in the Sunni area of town and in the Shiite districts. As of late November, there was only one school with six classrooms serving 500 pupils in Saba al Bor's Sunni area, Sultan said.

U.S. troops stationed in the town agreed. Sectarian interests in some ministries "still aren't letting things happen," said Capt. Timothy Dugan of the 7th Cavalry, 1st Brigade Combat Team of the Army's 1st Cavalry Division. Until they set aside such feelings, "they're going to continue to have these problems," said Dugan, who for a year has watched Saba al Bor try to recover from its sectarian strife.

The GAO report said sectarianism also was slowing

the opening of public health centers in Baghdad. It said "a number" of centers have not opened in part because of "problems within the Ministry of Health, including a sectarian agenda that determined which" clinics would open.

Steven Buckler, a U.S. reconstruction expert who works in Salahuddin province in the north, said security gains were helping local and provincial officials overcome obstacles.

He said officials were less afraid of being recognized when they traveled to Baghdad or were seen in public, so they were becoming more assertive.

"I'd say in about the last three months, we're seeing the Iraqi public officials standing up more and more in that independent way, to take charge of their own events," said Buckler, whose provincial reconstruction team is one of 25 across Iraq.

Baucom traces Saba al Bor's transition to the broken generator, which he says was repaired with the national government's help. It took about three weeks to get the parts, longer than had U.S. forces stepped in.

"We could have fixed it immediately. We stifled ourselves to get the local government to get the job done," he said. "But government takes time, and new government takes a lot of time."

Wall Street Journal
December 26, 2007
Pg. 3

4. U.S. Officials Differ Over Iran

Diplomats Credit Tehran For Improvement in Iraq, But Pentagon Is Reserved
By Yochi J. Dreazen and Jay Solomon

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon and State Department, long divided over the conduct of the Iraq war and reconstruction there, have a new point of contention: Iran, and how much credit it

deserves for recent security improvements in Iraq.

The split reflects the lingering U.S. uncertainty about how to interpret a sharp decline in the number of attacks inside Iraq featuring a powerful armor-piercing bomb that American officials have long linked to Iran. Attacks have fallen by more than 50% in recent months, with a subsequent drop in U.S. military casualties.

Within the State Department, an array of senior officials say they now believe that the Iranian government is taking steps to curb the flow of such advanced weaponry into Iraq and to pressure the country's largest Shiite militia, Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, to honor a shaky cease-fire with the U.S. Some of these officials say Washington should begin broader diplomatic talks with Tehran in response.

At the Pentagon, however, Defense Secretary Robert Gates and several of his top aides say it is too soon to conclude that Tehran has made a strategic decision to change its behavior in Iraq. Many in the military believe that the flow of Iranian weaponry is continuing, even if in reduced amounts, and that Shiite militants are stockpiling armaments for future use.

"We can see some clear signs that JAM is standing down," a senior military official in Baghdad said, using the Arabic acronym for Mr. Sadr's militia. "But once you get past the atmospherics, it's hard to see clear signs that they're standing down because Iran stopped giving them new toys to use against us."

The dispute carries significant implications for future U.S. policy toward Iran. A number of State Department officials are pushing for a diplomatic outreach to Iran, arguing that Iranian security assistance in Iraq could be the basis for a broader improvement in the chilly relationship between

Washington and Tehran.

Pentagon officials, by contrast, are urging a go-slow approach, arguing that the U.S. should wait for clearer evidence that Iran has made a lasting decision to help stabilize Iraq before beginning broader talks with Tehran.

Vali Nasr, an Iran expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, a nonpartisan New York-based think tank, says that the U.S. and Iran now have enough shared interests in Iraq to make direct talks worthwhile.

Mr. Nasr says that postwar Iraq has long posed a dilemma for Tehran. With more than 150,000 American troops stationed in Iraq, Iranian leaders may once have thought they needed to funnel weapons to Shiite militants inside Iraq to keep the U.S. preoccupied and stave off a possible U.S. strike on Iran, Mr. Nasr says.

But as a Shiite-dominated country, Iran also has close ties to the Shiites who have held power in Iraq since the 2003 U.S. invasion. That has convinced Iran's rulers that they need to take steps to pull Iraq back from the brink of outright collapse, shore up the embattled Iraqi central government and keep the country's competing Shiite militias from fighting each other for money and power, Mr. Nasr says.

The differences between the Pentagon and the State Department over Iran have come into clear view in recent days.

On Friday, Mr. Gates told reporters that he had "not yet" seen any persuasive evidence that Iran was trying to reduce the flow of weaponry into Iraq. A new Pentagon report about Iraq similarly concluded that there "was no identified decrease in Iranian training and funding of illegal Shia militias in Iraq."

State Department officials have taken a very different tack. U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker told reporters in Baghdad on Sunday that there

were "some indicators that the Iranians are using some influence to bring down violence from extremist Shia militias." That echoed similar comments by David Satterfield, the top State Department official on Iraq.

The State Department's praising of Iran's recent activities in Iraq comes as the Bush administration attempts to recalibrate its policy toward Tehran following the release this month of a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate downgrading the threat posed by the Iranian nuclear program.

A number of U.S. officials acknowledged privately that the new intelligence estimate has undermined efforts to impose economic sanctions on Iran. But there is also a belief by some in the Bush administration that the intelligence estimate might provide an opening for the U.S. to engage more constructively with Iran over both its nuclear program and its activities in Iraq.

"It may create an opening for them" to talk with us, a Bush administration official said of the intelligence estimate. He said the two governments could each use the report as a face-saving tool to explain any new diplomatic talks.

Indeed, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice noticeably toned down her rhetoric toward Iran following the release of the intelligence report. In a news conference last week, Ms. Rice said that the U.S. "doesn't have permanent enemies" and that she was "prepared to meet my [Iranian] counterpart anyplace and anywhere," provided Tehran suspends its uranium-enrichment activities.

A growing number of outside analysts believe that because of the intelligence estimate, Washington should no longer make Iran's suspension of its nuclear program a precondition for broader talks. Several former U.S. officials said they wouldn't

be surprised if the State Department ultimately agreed to talks even without such a suspension, given similar policy reversals by the White House toward North Korea and Syria.

Boston Globe

December 26, 2007

5. Sunnis Fighting Al Qaeda Must Be

Rewarded, General Says

Suicide attacks in Iraq kill 35, injure scores

By Patrick Quinn, Associated Press

YOUSSEFIYAH, Iraq - A top US commander warned yesterday that Sunnis who fight Al Qaeda in Iraq must be rewarded and recognized as legitimate members of Iraqi society - or else the hard-fought security gains of the past six months could be lost.

But the Shi'ite-dominated government is deeply concerned about the Sunni tribal groups, made up of men who in the past also fought against them - not just the Americans.

The warning from Major General Rick Lynch, the commander of US forces south of Baghdad, came as two separate suicide attacks killed at least 35 people around Iraq and injured scores of others. One of the bombings targeted a funeral procession for two members of a Sunni tribal group who local police said were accidentally killed by US forces in a dawn raid.

Lynch has credited these groups for much of the improvement in security in the region he commands, an area about the size of West Virginia and stretching to the Iranian and Saudi Arabian borders.

"The people say security is good now, but we need jobs. It's all about jobs and we have to create them," he said as he flew into patrol base Salie, just south of Baghdad. "We are in a tenuous situation. We need to give jobs to the citizens

[groups] or they will go back to fighting."

Lynch, who leads the Third Infantry Division, said that he had 26,000 members of the groups in the area he controls and that they have given US and Iraqi forces a key advantage in seeking to clear extremist-held pockets. They number about 70,000 countrywide, and are expected to grow by another 45,000 in coming months.

The groups, along with a surge of US troops into Iraq and a decision by firebrand Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr to stand down his Mahdi Army militia for six months, have contributed to a 60 percent drop in violence around Iraq since June.

The US military now funds the groups, known as Awakening Councils, Concerned Citizens and other names. But they expect to be rewarded for their efforts with jobs, either in the Iraqi security forces or elsewhere.

"They want to be recognized as legitimate members of society and that has to happen," Lynch said as he flew over an area south of Baghdad once known as the "triangle of death."

According to Lynch, the groups helped reduce violence in his area, a former Sunni insurgent hotbed, by 75 percent in the past six months.

"The government of Iraq has to take advantage of this opportunity," by focusing on economic development and governance, he said.

In his area, Lynch is trying to bring them all under the control of the Iraqi Army.

"We do want the good citizens members, we do want to them to join us," said Iraqi Army Captain Hamdan Nasir. But he added that some in the area still consider his troops "dangerous."

US officials have said there are plans to absorb about 20,000 of the men into the security forces, and America plans to spend \$155 million to help create new jobs and

provide vocational training. The Iraqi government has pledged to match that amount. "I see great progress because citizens are taking things into their own hands. Now we have to connect the dots," Lynch said. "It's tenuous. This could still go backward."

He added that a decision to build patrol bases in population centers south of Baghdad also helped because it has convinced people living there that the United States will back up local forces.

At patrol base Copper, just south of the capital, one of Lynch's captains said it was the main motivation behind many of the groups.

"Families were forced out by Al Qaeda in Iraq... They want to come back and form concerned local citizens groups and push Al Qaeda out," said Captain George Morris of Boston.

Los Angeles Times
December 26, 2007

6. 24 Iraqis Killed In Two Suicide Attacks

Bombings in Baiji and Baqubah target security forces and volunteers. Turkey launches more airstrikes in the north.

By Alexandra Zavis, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

BAGHDAD — Two suicide bombings killed at least 24 people and injured up to 100 others north of Baghdad on Tuesday, the latest attacks to take aim at Iraqi security forces and local volunteers credited with helping to bring about a major drop in violence in former insurgent strongholds.

The attacks in Baiji and Baqubah shattered a period of relative calm as Muslims marked the four-day Eid al-Adha festival, which began last Wednesday for Sunnis and Friday for Shiites. For the first time, the government extended the holiday until Tuesday, when the country's tiny Christian minority celebrated Christmas.

Insurgents have increasingly turned their guns on volunteers, many of whom once fought alongside them. Northern Iraq has suffered many such attacks, as insurgents pushed out of Baghdad and Anbar province seek to establish footholds in the region. Residents in Baqubah said leaflets had been circulated urging them to kill volunteers.

In Tuesday's worst attack, a suicide bomber blew up a truck at a checkpoint in Baiji, site of a major oil refinery, 125 miles north of the capital. Police and hospital officials said at least 25 people were killed and 75 injured. The U.S. military put the toll at 20 dead and 80 injured.

The blast, on a road leading to an oil industry housing complex, ignited cooking gas being sold nearby, police said. A series of secondary explosions collapsed walls, shattered windows and scattered burning canister pieces for hundreds of yards.

Iraqi security force members and local volunteers who were manning the checkpoint were among the dead. But most of the victims were civilians, including women and children who had gathered to buy the fuel, hospital officials said.

"What kind of Islam is this?" asked Ali Arkan, who was asleep in his bed when a large piece of glass smashed into his shoulder. "Surely this is not the Islam that we know. These days we are living are very holy days for Muslims and Christians... Those people have no respect and no relationship with either Christianity or Islam."

He spoke by phone from a hospital bed in Tikrit, where he was taken after the blast.

Khalaf Muhsin had just finished breakfast with his family when the explosion sent pieces of brick, shards of glass and chunks of concrete through his house. He lashed out at the assailants who targeted the security forces and local

volunteers.

"Those are our sons who volunteered to protect us," he said. "From where have these hands come to kill us?"

The Interior Ministry in Baghdad fired the Baiji police chief and declared an immediate curfew in the city.

In Baqubah, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, police said a suicide bomber detonated explosives strapped to his waist during a funeral procession for a member of the volunteer force and his adult son. At least four people were killed and 21 injured, they said.

Police and two members of the volunteer force, known locally as the Awakening, said U.S. troops had mistaken the father and son for Sunni Muslim militants and shot them the previous night.

"It was nighttime," said an Awakening street commander, who asked to be identified only by his first name, Khalid. "One of them was carrying a weapon, but he was not wearing a sash to distinguish him as with the Awakening."

The U.S. military said that it had killed two "unknown enemy," one of whom turned out to be a member of the Awakening group, which American forces also call "concerned local citizens." Four other people were detained during the raid, the military said in a statement.

Such killings by U.S. troops threaten to undermine cooperation between American forces and local tribesmen, a linchpin of the U.S. strategy to defeat Sunni and Shiite extremists in Iraq. Last week, Sunni tribesmen in Anbar held a brief demonstration in the provincial capital, Ramadi, to protest the stabbing death of an Iraqi policeman during a fight with a U.S. Marine.

The Shiite-led central government, which has been slower to embrace the strategy of making use of the volunteers, worries that insurgents have infiltrated the ad hoc force, which has grown to more than 70,000 in a matter

of months.

Iraqi Defense Minister Abdul-Qader Mohammed Jassim Mifarji warned at a recent news briefing that the government would not tolerate a "third force."

U.S. officials have said there are plans to absorb about 20% of the volunteers into the Iraqi police and army. They plan to spend \$155 million to help create jobs and provide vocational training for the rest, and they say the Iraqi government has pledged to match that amount.

In other developments, Turkey unleashed airstrikes against Turkish Kurd separatist guerrillas in northern Iraq for the third consecutive day. The Turkish warplanes flew less than two miles into Iraqi airspace and bombed an area with no civilian population, according to Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish regional government.

Iraqi officials had no information on possible casualties among militants of the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which has fought the Turkish government since 1984 for autonomy for Turkey's Kurdish minority. A similar military raid Dec. 16 killed at least one civilian, injured several others and caused hundreds to flee their homes.

Elsewhere, U.S.-led forces killed 13 suspected insurgents and detained 27 in Baghdad and north of the capital in the preceding 48 hours, the military said in a statement.

Times staff writer Raheem Salman in Baghdad and special correspondents in Baghdad, Irbil, Samarra and Tikrit contributed to this report.

Washington Post
December 26, 2007
Pg. 14

7. Two Bombings Kill At Least 26 In N. Iraq

Officials Call for Increase in Security Forces

By Joshua Partlow,

Washington Post Foreign Service

BAGHDAD, Dec. 25 -- Two bombs ripped through a pair of cities north of Baghdad on Tuesday, causing some of the worst carnage in the country in recent weeks and revealing that, despite the relative calm that has taken hold, insurgent groups remain capable of carrying out devastating attacks.

The morning bombs were detonated in Baiji, an oil refinery town, and Baqubah, a provincial capital where the Sunni insurgent group al-Qaeda in Iraq has lost some of its earlier dominance. The attacks, which killed at least 26 people and wounded as many as 100, prompted calls by officials for an increase in Iraqi soldiers and police in the northern provinces to quell the violence.

In Baqubah, tensions were particularly high because of allegations by Iraqis that, hours before the bombing there, U.S. forces had executed two members of an American-backed volunteer force. The U.S. military denied the accusations.

The bombing in Baiji, near a checkpoint outside a two-story housing complex for oil industry employees, was the more devastating of the two attacks Tuesday. The complex was guarded by members of the Facilities Protection Service, part of the Interior Ministry, and members of the local Sunni volunteer security force, one of the many groups increasingly targeted by insurgents after joining forces with the U.S. military.

Police and officials in Salahuddin province said a small car loaded with explosives detonated about 9:30 a.m. outside the checkpoint.

"This is one of our worst attacks," said Hussein Ahmed Mahjoub, the mayor of Baiji. The bombing killed at least 22 people, and Mahjoub said most of the victims "were civilians, including women and

children."

The second blast occurred about 11 a.m. in western Baqubah, in Diyala province. A suicide bomber blew up a vehicle amid a crowd of protesters following a funeral, according to U.S. and Iraqi officials. That bombing killed at least four people and wounded 19 others, said Maj. Shawn Garcia, a U.S. military spokesman in Diyala. The police chief in the province said more than 20 people were wounded.

According to Iraqi officials and residents of Baqubah, the funeral was for two members of the city's Sunni volunteer force, former members of an insurgent group who had turned against al-Qaeda in Iraq and allied themselves with the U.S. military. Despite that alliance, however, relatives and residents blamed the U.S. military for the two men's deaths.

The men were identified as Uday Hassan Hameed, 27, and Hadi Jasim Rasheed, 60, according to Haji Basim al-Bayati, a member of the volunteer force. A Washington Post special correspondent who arrived at the scene after 5 a.m. took photos of the two corpses. The hands of both men were bound with plastic handcuffs, and the younger man was wearing an orange reflective vest on which the word "security" was written in English. Several men at the scene said they believed the two had been captured, handcuffed and then shot.

Maj. Garcia said that American soldiers did kill two individuals during a 3 a.m. operation in Baqubah but that the soldiers fired only after taking fire themselves and later found the two dead individuals to be armed. In a statement, the U.S. military later confirmed that one of the dead was a member of the volunteer force, known as Concerned Local Citizens. But the statement did not identify the dead men by name.

Nazar Muhammad Hassan, 32, the brother of Uday Hameed, said his brother was on duty when he was killed by U.S. soldiers, wearing the vest given to him by the American military to identify himself as a security volunteer. When Nazar Hassan arrived at the morgue, he opened the body bag of his brother.

"He was still wearing the vest around his chest, even though it was stained with blood. The vest did not protect him from the American's bullets," he said.

Angered by the killings, a crowd of more than 60 armed men, many wearing their identification as security volunteers, began a procession to bury the bodies, he said. At one point, members of the procession were chanting: "No God but Allah. America is the enemy of Allah," he recalled.

"We are condemning the American criminal act of killing Hadi Jasim Rasheed and Uday Hassan Hameed... They are innocent," one banner read. "We are demanding the occupier to leave immediately."

As the men were carrying the coffins, the suicide car bomber attacked, several people said.

The incident could have damaging repercussions for the U.S. military if large numbers of security volunteers develop animosity toward the Americans. Both American and Iraqi officials cite the ascendance of the volunteers as a key factor in prying al-Qaeda in Iraq's grip off of Baqubah and in reducing violence across the province in recent months. Nazar Hassan said he, for one, was done helping the Americans.

"We have walked all this way with the Americans to kill al-Qaeda and to kick them out of here, and this is how they repay us?" he said. "And now, from this moment, I will stop fighting al-Qaeda. I will join al-Qaeda or any other side that will attack the American forces."

In Diyala and Salahuddin provinces, local officials demanded after the explosions that the central government provide more forces to combat insurgents.

Mahjoub, the mayor of Baiji, said his city had about 700 to 800 police officers to protect a population of 160,000. "The police force here is too small, and they are poorly supplied," he said.

In Diyala, officials said they wanted another Iraqi army division to augment the 5th Division, which is currently in the province.

"Several times we have demanded that the force we have in Baqubah is not sufficient to control all these areas," said Ibrahim Majilan, the provincial council leader in Diyala.

Despite the recent attacks -- and a brazen abduction near Baqubah on Monday -- officials in both provinces said overall security has improved in the past year.

"Six months ago it was total confusion and it has started to improve," said Aouf Rahoumi Majid, the deputy governor of Diyala province. "We think that now the al-Qaeda organization is only using car bombs and explosives, rather than direct confrontations, because most of them have now fled."

But he cautioned: "This type of battle could last for months if not years, because such a battle cannot be decisively won."

Special correspondents Saad al-Izzi, Naseer Nouri and K.I. Ibrahim in Baghdad and other Washington Post staff in Iraq contributed to this report.

New York Daily News
December 26, 2007

8. Video Shows Car Carrying 6 Al Qaeda Leaders Blown Up By U.S. Helicopter

By Tamer el-Ghobashy, Daily News Staff Writer

A grainy videotape

released Tuesday shows a carload of important Al Qaeda terrorists in Iraq being blown up by missiles from a U.S. Army chopper, military officials said.

At least one of the dead operatives was a "high-value" target linked to suicide bomb attacks, including the car bombing of the Australian Embassy in Baghdad, an Army spokesman told FoxNews.com.

Of the six men killed in the Sunday attack, one was "believed to be an Al Qaeda cell leader known to facilitate attacks and orchestrate suicide bomb attacks," Maj. Alayne Conway of the 3rd Infantry Division told Fox.

Conway did not release the insurgent's name but said he was arrested Nov. 11 and later released. It is believed he had conducted two attacks on coalition forces, including one on Thanksgiving, Conway said.

The black-and-white 31-second video was shot from the sky and shows a small black sedan idling before it was hit by Hellfire missiles shot from an Apache helicopter.

Military officials told Fox that a tip from local Iraqis put the operation in motion.

"Locals gave [us] tips reporting his location and movement," Conway said. "Both the 2nd and 3rd brigades of the 3rd Infantry Division quickly worked together to confirm the precise location of the terrorists."

Maj. Dave Fivecoat, operations officer for the 3rd Infantry Division, told Fox the "engagement is an example of two surge brigades sharing information faster than the insurgents can react."

ISTANBUL — Turkish airstrikes on Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq have killed more than 150 rebels and hit more than 200 targets in recent days, the Turkish military said Tuesday, countering Kurdish claims that only a handful of people were killed in the attacks.

The air raids, on Dec. 16 and 22, were the first large-scale assaults on Iraqi territory since the Turkish Parliament approved cross-border operations in mid-October against hide-outs of the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party, known by its Kurdish initials P.K.K.

According to a statement by the Turkish Army, Turkish fighter planes hit 22 targets in the Metina, Zap, Avashin and Hakurk regions in Iraq on Dec. 16, after intelligence confirmed a rebel presence at the sites.

Eleven locations around the Qandil Mountains, where the P.K.K.'s central command is based, were also heavily damaged, including several training bases, anti-aircraft platforms, warehouses and weapons stored in hide-outs, the army said. The area was struck again on Dec. 22, the army said.

The military also issued black-and-white aerial video and still photographs that it said showed targets before and after the bombings.

Turkey's assertions came as Kurdish and American officials said that Turkish jets crossed into Iraqi airspace again on Tuesday, in what American officials said was the fourth such flight over the border in two weeks.

Turkish officials did not comment on claims that it flew into Iraq on Tuesday, but confirmed that it had carried out an air and ground operation early Tuesday on its side of the border in southeastern Turkey. An army statement said five rebels were killed, including two women, part of a rebel group preparing an attack.

The Turkish government accuses the P.K.K. of

launching cross-border attacks on Turkish soil from remote bases in the semiautonomous region of northern Iraq, which is administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The conflict has placed the United States in a delicate situation. American officials have supported Turkey's right to self-defense against the P.K.K., which both Turkey and the United States consider a terrorist organization. It has also provided intelligence to Turkey, a crucial American ally in the American war effort in Iraq.

But the Kurdish authorities in northern Iraq are also important partners for the United States. The Kurdish region is Iraq's most stable, and both the Kurdish and Iraqi governments have objected to the Turkish attacks, while refusing to take action themselves against the militants.

American officials have urged Turkey not to respond in a way that would destabilize Iraq.

The Kurds have consistently denied suffering heavy P.K.K. casualties, saying the airstrikes caused little damage in deserted mountainous areas. Kurdish news Web sites have quoted a P.K.K. official saying that only five of the group's fighters had been killed in all of the recent Turkish attacks, and five or six wounded, but provided no evidence to support the claim.

Kurdish politicians accuse the Turks of violating their sovereignty and inflicting civilian casualties. Nawzad Hadi, the governor of Hawler, a town just a few miles inside the Iraqi border, said the Dec. 16 attack displaced 381 families and killed four civilians.

The Turkish military rejects such claims as P.K.K. propaganda.

"It is clear that such baseless claims encouraging terror, the common enemy of humanity, can only harm those

who fabricate them," the Turkish Army statement said. It insisted that 150 to 175 rebels were killed in unsheltered locations and in hide-outs, and that a large number of wounded were taken to nearby hospitals in Erbil, Raniya, Kaladiza and Choman.

The Kurds also accuse the Turks of exaggerating. Dr. Sherko Abdullah, the director general of hospitals in Sulaimaniya, said, "Until now, no wounded P.K.K. have been brought to us, only civilians from the bombarded villages who went to Hawler because it is much closer than Sulaimaniya for them."

However the Kurdish authorities have sealed off the mountainous border region in recent weeks, making it impossible to independently verify the claims and counterclaims. The P.K.K. is also known to have its own hospitals, warehouses and graveyards in the Qandil Mountains where it can treat, sustain and bury its fighters away from the public eye.

According to Turkey's semiofficial Anatolian News Agency, Turkish surveillance planes were spotted early Tuesday over Cukurca in the Hakkari Province of Turkey's far southeast, along the border with Iraq, and above the Kanimasi region in northern Iraq. Shelling was also heard, the agency reported.

Brig. Hussein Tamar, an Iraqi border guard official in Dahuk Province, said that the planes struck an area that had been evacuated earlier this month, and that no one was hurt.

In Baghdad, the American military confirmed that Turkish aircraft entered Iraqi airspace on Tuesday — after it rejected Kurdish claims of a Turkish attack on Sunday — but said it could not confirm whether bombs were dropped.

Rear Adm. Greg Smith, director of communications for the American-led forces in Iraq, said Turkey had notified American officials in advance

New York Times
December 26, 2007

9. Turkey Says Its Raids In Iraq Killed 150 Rebels

By Sebnem Arsu and Stephen Farrell

of the latest raid, as is customary, telling them it was a reconnaissance flight, not a strike mission.

"They tell us where they are going and what their mission is," he said. "The first three missions were all identified as strike missions. They said their intentions were to go and drop ordnance and they told us that at the time."

"On this occasion they told us it was a reconnaissance mission," he continued. However, he confirmed that while the Americans monitor all such Turkish flights, they would not necessarily know if, having crossed the border, the Turkish pilots changed their mission from reconnaissance to bombing.

Sebnem Arsu reported from Istanbul, and Stephen Farrell from Baghdad. Reporting was contributed by Iraqi employees of The New York Times from Sulaimaniya, Baquba, Kirkuk and Mosul, and by Khalid al-Ansary, Balen Y. Younis and Mudhafer al-Husaini from Baghdad.

Las Vegas Review-Journal
December 25, 2007

10. Berkley Upbeat About Progress In Iraq

Las Vegas Democrat acknowledges troop 'surge' has paid off

By Steve Tetreault, Stephens
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- Visiting Iraq for the first time, Rep. Shelley Berkley said Monday the U.S. military and Iraqi police have made more progress than she expected in quelling violence that had beset portions of the country.

Berkley delivered a generally upbeat report on Iraq in the midst of a weeklong trip to the Middle East with a half-dozen other members of Congress.

The Las Vegas Democrat has been a war critic and had disapproved of the troop "surge" when President Bush announced it early this year on the recommendation of Gen.

David Petraeus, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq.

But on Monday she acknowledged the infusion of 28,500 U.S. soldiers had a positive impact. The visiting delegation was given a tour of Ramadi, a city about 70 miles west of Baghdad that largely has been cleansed of insurgents.

"This is a difference from what I anticipated," Berkley said. "I did not anticipate the progress and the extraordinary morale of our troops.

"They believe they are turning the corner," Berkley said. "Nobody is doing a victory lap at this point, but the reality is the military has done an extraordinary job."

Berkley's praise extended to the Iraqi police who are assisting U.S. troops in patrolling neighborhoods.

"For years we had heard they weren't ready to take over, but at this point there is such a significant difference," Berkley said. "The Iraqis are truly stepping up to the plate and that accounts for the lowering of violence.

"Wherever you go, Iraqis and our American servicemen are telling us that the difference is dramatic," Berkley said. "The violence is down 60 percent from last year."

Despite apparent progress, Iraq remains a "terrible" place still in the midst of war, Berkley emphasized.

"I was wearing 40 pounds worth of armor," she said. "It is not a walk in the park on a Sunday afternoon."

At a dinner Sunday night, Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker told the House members it may take another year or longer to determine if Iraq has truly stabilized.

"The general and Ambassador Crocker believe the next 19 months would give us a good idea of the situation," Berkley said. "Whether they have really turned the corner, or whether this is just the insurgency biding its time,"

waiting for the United States to leave before resuming its activities.

The House lawmakers, led by Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., Armed Services Committee chairman, are spending Christmas in Iraq. Berkley said she planned to have lunch with two sets of Nevada soldiers.

The lawmakers then plan to fly to Turkey to meet with President Abdullah Gul before returning to the United States this weekend.

Berkley said she could not say how this week's trip would affect her position on the war. She said Congress is unlikely to take any votes before Petraeus delivers a progress report in March.

Berkley said Monday that military progress will be only part of what Congress considers in debating the U.S. commitment to Iraq.

Congressional votes also will consider whether Iraqi leaders have made progress in building a consensus for how post-war Iraq will be governed among the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurdish groups.

And, Berkley said, "nobody is putting any hard money on that."

In the year coming to an end, Berkley voted against the surge and generally in favor of speeding redeployment of U.S. troops.

Berkley voted in November for a bill that would have tied \$50 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to a troop redeployment beginning within 30 days and continuing to completion by Dec. 15, 2008. The anti-war effort failed in the Senate.

In October, Berkley voted to require Bush to report to Congress every 90 days on his planning for withdrawing U.S. forces, a strategy bill sponsors said was aimed at pressuring the president.

In May, the Nevadan voted for a bill that released a portion of Bush's funding request for Iraq and withheld the remainder until generals

delivered a progress report on the surge.

But on what was considered the most stringent anti-war measure of the year, Berkley voted in May against a bill that called for U.S. withdrawals to begin within 90 days, and to be completed in 180 days.

Los Angeles Times
December 26, 2007

11. Muslims Join Christians For Mass

A Chaldean Catholic church in Baghdad is packed for the Christmas service.

By Usama Redha and Kimi Yoshino, Los Angeles Times
Staff Writers

BAGHDAD — Outside Mar Eliya church, not much had changed since last Christmas: Concrete blocks still surround the building and guards check the IDs of those entering.

But inside, hundreds of Iraqi worshipers -- Christians and Muslims -- were crammed into the overflowing Chaldean Catholic church Tuesday, celebrating the holiday and the fact that they felt safe enough to venture out of their homes to attend Christmas Mass.

"Last year was the year of misery, desperation and sadness," said Samar Jorge Gorges, 33. "But this year is better. So many people attend the Mass and you can see that their praying was joyful."

Cardinal Emmanuel III Delly, the patriarch of Iraq's ancient Chaldean Church who last month was elevated by Pope Benedict XVI to become Iraq's first Roman Catholic cardinal, said Mass, appealing for peace and unity across the war-scarred country.

"Iraq is like a garden and its beauty is the variety of its flowers and scent," Delly said during the service.

Among those attending were several Shiite Muslim sheiks, including Raad Tamimi, who said they had come "in solidarity with our Christian brothers ... to plant

the seed of love again in the new Iraq." Tamimi, a tribal leader, was excited to shake the cardinal's hand and asked that a photo be taken with his cellphone.

Delly has encouraged Iraq's displaced Christians to return home to help rebuild the country. Although some have done so, he acknowledged that many are still afraid.

"Some people have started to come back, but they are still asking for stability and security," he said. "When this has been spread, when peace and forgiveness will be established, then everyone will return."

He said he was encouraged by a recent visit to the Dora neighborhood, where he attended the reopening of St. John the Baptist Church, which had been abandoned and looted.

"It was our brothers the Muslims that encouraged us to open the church ... and helped us raise the Christ over the church again," Delly said.

The south Baghdad neighborhood was once a vibrant mix of Sunni Muslims, Shiites and Christians. But most Shiites were driven out last year by violence. This year, Sunni militants gave the Christian population the choice of converting, paying a tax or leaving. Most chose to leave. But Delly said a few have started to return, encouraged by a downturn in violence.

Jameel Hamouda, 55, who attended the Christmas services, said four of his family members had left Iraq, but that he was hopeful they would return.

"This is the first time the Muslim figures like sheiks and Shiite clerics attended the Mass," Hamouda said. "I feel happy and my soul filled with peace. God willing, there will be a union."

On American military bases around Baghdad, troops celebrated Christmas with a cautious view.

"There's a tremendous amount of progress on the

ground," said Army Brig. Gen. James Huggins, deputy commander of the 3rd Infantry Division in charge of operations in southern Iraq. "There's a lot of momentum. It's just that we've got to take a few pockets and take it to the insurgents a bit more... We've got a pretty tough mission ahead of us. We're going to need 100%."

Touring five camps Tuesday -- ranging from large bases with several hundred soldiers to abandoned homes converted into small outposts -- Huggins played the role of Santa Claus.

Instead of a sleigh, he hopped into and out of a Black Hawk helicopter. And instead of red knapsacks, his assistants toted camouflage backpacks filled with token gifts, such as small laser lights and international calling cards.

At each stop, he reminded soldiers to call home, gave them a pep talk -- "It really is an investment in our future" -- and thanked them "for everything you're doing."

Soldiers said they enjoyed better food than usual, including lobster tails, ham, turkey, prime rib and all the fixings.

At Camp Hammer south of Baghdad, some planned to play football. Others were more interested in watching the Lakers basketball game.

But what they really wanted was to go home. This Christmas with family missed put them one day closer to leaving, they said.

"This is the last push of our deployment," said 1st Lt. Ruben Ramos, 27. "We're looking forward to getting home and seeing our families."

Times staff writer Alexandra Zavis in Baghdad contributed to this report.

Miami Herald
December 25, 2007

Pg. 1

12. Troops, Iraqis Make The Best Of Christmas

In Iraq, the ghosts of

Christmas past haunted Iraqis and U.S. soldiers alike, but celebrations were as good as could be.

By Jamie Gumbrecht and Laith Hammoudi, McClatchy News Service

BAGHDAD -- In a war zone, Christmas sometimes is as much about compromise as it is about celebration.

Yousif Akhsho Youmara, who owns an auto-body repair shop in Baghdad, remembers the glorious Christmases of his youth, when family members would stay the night and Muslim and Christian guests would drop by for days.

"Life used to be more cheerful. Not like now," he recalled.

Still, Christmas this year will be better than it was last year, when Youmara was too frightened to decorate or attend church services. This year, he plans to take his wife and three children to a small neighborhood church and have some family and friends over. They have new clothes, freshly baked *klaich* -- a rosewater-and-date pastry -- and a decorated tree.

It's modest, but an improvement.

"We started not to pay the same attention to Christmas," Youmara said. "We started to feel shame for celebrating while neighbors and relatives were sad for losing their young men."

At Patrol Base Warrior Keep in southwest Baghdad, all wish they were home. But at least there won't be any patrols outside the base for the Fort Campbell, Ky.-based 101st Airborne Division, 1st Battalion, 187th regiment, which arrived in Iraq in October: Lt. Col. RJ Lillibridge, of Clarksville, Tenn., didn't want to risk having to deliver bad news to families on the holiday.

So instead of patrolling, the soldiers are staying on base, playing *Halo* video game tournaments, waiting in lines for phones and computers to contact home, and sleeping in

past breakfast or even lunch.

Around 11 a.m. on Christmas Eve, a four-piece brass band showed up for a holiday concert. When the music roused the sleeping soldiers, the band moved upstairs to entertain the six-member roof guard and let the others rest.

Iraqi Christians and U.S. soldiers will celebrate Christmas in similar ways: with specially prepared meals, small church services and thoughts of family and friends far away. In this war-torn country, neither the Iraqis nor the U.S. soldiers are celebrating the way they really want to.

Violence is way down from last Christmas. But there's hardly a sense of joy. Too many people are missing.

Iraq once was home to about 800,000 Christians -- about 3 percent of the population -- but many now have fled to other countries. The Christian archbishop of Basra urged his followers in the southern city to pray on Christmas but to avoid other celebrations to protest the killings of a Christian brother and sister.

At the historic Church of the Virgin Mary in the relatively safe, religiously mixed Baghdad neighborhood of Karrada, leaders expected fewer than half of the 700 people who used to attend Christmas services.

"The church used to be full," said Father Butrus, the church leader. "We used to put loudspeakers near the gate because the main hall couldn't hold all of them. This year, we decided not even to bring a Christmas tree because of the security situation."

At Patrol Base Warrior Keep, Staff Sgt. Barry Brennan's present came on Christmas Eve morning: His wife, Staff Sgt. Josie Brennan, arrived on a Black Hawk helicopter. Their superiors flew her in, saying there was no reason the couple shouldn't be together considering Josie

Brennan worked at nearby Camp Mahmudiyah. The Brennans exchanged gifts and ate together.

Their children, three boys ages 8, 7 and 2, are back home, living with grandparents. Last year, the family was together in Colorado, building snowmen and playing with toys on Christmas.

"I just keep saying, 'They're OK, they're OK,'" Josie Brennan said. "It's stuff you don't want to think about."

Even those who comfort the loneliest soldiers feel the pain of Christmas missed. Chaplain Eric Light of Kingsport, Tenn., was away from his wife and three children for the first time.

"If I didn't feel like this is where I needed to be, I think it'd be horrible," Light said between homilies. "Our holidays are so tied to our families, it's nearly impossible to re-create here."

But the soldiers tried, with steak-and-crab-leg dinners, competitive skits to win a 42-inch plasma TV for the base, and Christmas presents left unopened for weeks so they could have that old feeling of anticipation.

Many were familiar with the stilted, duty-driven celebration. They had missed the holiday before, some as many as four times since 2001.

"Next year, when we're all home for Christmas ... " Sgt. Maj. Eric Crabtree of Clarksville, Tenn., told the soldiers, then cut himself off.

"*Insha'Allah*," he said, using an Arabic phrase they have all heard. It means "God willing."

USA Today
December 26, 2007
Pg. 1

13. Military Family Members Share Public's Division On Iraq War, Bush

Polls: Almost half say invasion was a mistake

By Gregg Zoroya, USA Today

Close family members of U.S. troops are split on whether the Iraq invasion was a mistake, and 55% disapprove of President Bush's job performance, according to USA TODAY/Gallup Polls focusing on immediate relatives of servicemembers.

"They've maxed out on the troops. You've got guys who are over there on their fourth or fifth tours. It's ridiculous," says Jeanette Knowles, 40, of Mountain Home, Idaho, whose brother, Jeff, served a tour in Iraq with the Oregon National Guard.

Knowles, who calls herself a Democratic-leaning moderate, says her disapproval of Bush stems from his handling of the war.

Military families are more supportive of the war than Americans without immediate family members in the military, the polls show. Among Americans without military relatives, 59% say the invasion was a mistake, compared with 49% of immediate family members.

The data on close relatives of troops were gleaned from four national polls between Sept. 7 and Dec. 2. The polls identified 548 people as wives, children, parents, siblings, grandparents or a close in-law of a servicemember. Among them are 301 people whose loved ones served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Previous military family polling was largely of people who identified themselves as related in some way to a servicemember.

"I don't want to see another Korea. I don't want to see us stay there (in Iraq) forever. And you don't want to be in a country if they don't want us there," says Bruce Bartley, 65, of Fredonia, N.Y., whose son, Army Capt. Steven Bartley, is on his second tour in Iraq. The elder Bartley, who describes himself as a conservative, disapproves of Bush's job performance and says the invasion was a mistake.

Among military families, 55% disapprove of Bush's performance compared with 64% of Americans without relatives in the service in the latest USA TODAY/Gallup Poll. Men in military families are more approving of Bush (47%) than female relatives (36%).

"The numbers really aren't much of a surprise," says Joyce Raezer, executive director of the National Military Family Association. "They show that the military is in many ways a reflection of the country as a whole, not an isolated subculture, as some would portray it."

Bush considers families' support important, White House spokeswoman Emily Lawrimore says. "But he believes that it's important to continue to base his decisions on the advice he receives from commanders on the ground," she says.

More than 1.5 million servicemembers have been sent to Iraq or Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001, and Army combat tours last up to 15 months. Bush meets in private with grieving families, visits the wounded and frequently speaks to gatherings of military families.

USA Today/Gallup Poll

How Americans with a "close family member" in the military and others view the war in Iraq:

With family -- 49%: A mistake, 48%: Not a mistake

Without family -- 59%: A mistake, 39%: Not a mistake

Source: Four USA Today polls between Sept. 7 and Dec. 2 of 548 respondents. Margin of error: +/-5 percentage points.

Los Angeles Times
December 25, 2007

14. Bush Calls To Thank 10 Service Members

He told them that he knows they miss family and that they're 'serving a cause that is very noble,' his spokeswoman

says. Most are in Iraq.

By Maura Reynolds, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
WASHINGTON

—President Bush on Monday called 10 members of the U.S. military stationed in Iraq and elsewhere around the world to thank them for serving their country and spending the holidays away from their families.

White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said the president told them that their country was proud of them.

"He said he couldn't thank them enough for their contribution to their country, hopes they are in high spirits, and that they are serving a cause that is very noble," Perino said.

"He said, 'I know that you miss your family.'"

The telephone calls went to three soldiers, two Marines, two sailors, two members of the Air Force and one Coast Guard petty officer. Seven are serving in Iraq, one in Afghanistan and two on the high seas -- one in the Persian Gulf and one in the Bering Sea.

The president "asked them to pass on to their colleagues his appreciation and his wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy new year," Perino said.

One of the calls was to Marine Cpl. Orlando P. Anaya, who is stationed at Al Asad air base in Iraq. His father, Ray, said the phone call was an honor for his son and for the family.

"I wasn't too surprised because I know he deserves it -- everyone over there deserves it. But I was honored," Ray Anaya said from his home in Roswell, N.M.

Bush also exchanged holiday greetings with Russian President Vladimir V. Putin and spoke with Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, about recent Turkish attacks on Kurdish separatists in northern Iraq. U.S. officials have acknowledged providing intelligence to Turkey to assist the operations.

"The president and the prime minister ... discussed their common efforts to fight terrorism, and the importance of the United States, Turkey and Iraq working together to confront" the separatists, said National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe.

Bush and his wife, Laura, are spending Christmas at Camp David, the presidential retreat in the western Maryland mountains. They are being joined by their daughters, Jenna and Barbara; Laura Bush's mother, Jenna Welch; the president's brother Marvin and sister Doro Bush Koch; and their families.

The menu for Christmas Day lunch includes roast turkey, corn bread stuffing and sweet potato pie, with pecan pie, pumpkin pie and red velvet cake for dessert.

On Wednesday, the president and his wife head to Crawford, Texas, where they will spend the rest of the holiday break and ring in the new year before returning to Washington on Jan. 1.

Wall Street Journal
December 26, 2007
Pg. 3

15. Prospects Fade For Pentagon Satellite Plan

By Andy Pasztor

When the U.S. space agency picked Boeing Co. recently to build as much as \$1.2 billion of satellites, analysts and company officials predicted it would improve Boeing's chances of winning larger, higher-profile military-satellite contracts in coming months. But the survival of the Pentagon's largest satellite-communications program now appears increasingly in doubt.

That could undermine ambitious growth plans not only for Boeing's space unit and its subcontractors, but also for many of its rivals.

After years of nagging quality-control lapses and satellite-manufacturing

missteps at Boeing, its surprise victory over Northrop Grumman Corp. for the business of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration belies growing signs of budget pressures confronting the aerospace industry. The expected cuts threaten even the military's premier, next-generation satellite-communications project, known as the Transformational Satellite Communications System, or TSAT.

The Bush administration in February is expected to propose reducing spending on the program to about \$8 billion through 2013 -- \$4 billion less than the total Boeing and other contractors had anticipated a few weeks ago, according to industry officials familiar with the details. Spending plans had been slowed and stretched out in previous budget cycles, and the program's champions are fretting that it may not survive further scale backs.

The TSAT system was designed to use lasers to send data, video and other signals among satellites and to the ground at unprecedented speeds, including real-time signals from unmanned reconnaissance aircraft and ground forces on the move. The goal was to increase the military's satellite capacity thousands of times above current limits by creating a user-friendly, Internet-like transmission network available around the world regardless of weather, terrain or ground facilities.

An initial satellite launch was once envisioned in less than a decade, with the program carrying an overall price tag of more than \$25 billion. Spending was expected to climb to between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion annually.

But now, even supporters acknowledge that the first launch probably won't occur before 2019 and yearly outlays, at most, will run less than half the levels expected earlier. A decision on whether to proceed

has been postponed by at least a year, most likely until late 2008, people familiar with the matter say.

A. Thomas Young, the Pentagon's top outside space-policy adviser, said in an interview earlier this month that budget reductions and delays of that magnitude could pave the way for failure and the eventual disintegration of the program. Without commenting specifically on the Bush administration's coming budget proposal, Mr. Young said: "If we are not careful, we may be putting together another troubled [satellite] program."

Mr. Young, who led two earlier panels studying space programs for the Air Force, is heading a congressionally mandated review of military and spy satellites for the Pentagon. In the past, he criticized military brass and lawmakers for failing to include adequate budget margins to cope with unexpected technical hurdles.

If TSAT "is deemed not to be affordable," Mr. Young said, "the right time to find that out is now."

Mr. Young's comments are the strongest sign yet that the program is losing momentum inside the Pentagon and, considering its lukewarm support on Capitol Hill, could end up being scrapped. The original plan called for a six-satellite fleet; however, many proponents advocate scaling back the effort and building only two satellites to kick off the program.

Boeing, which is heading one team competing for the TSAT contract, declined to comment on the specific budget outlook. Northrop, a major subcontractor to the rival team headed by Lockheed Martin Corp., also declined to comment, as did Lockheed and the Air Force.

In a teleconference with reporters earlier this month, John Peterson, the head of Boeing's TSAT team, said "We're obviously disappointed

in what we've heard" about budget prospects. Nevertheless, he said the company is working on contingency plans "to provide our customer a range" of options consistent "with the recent funding decisions."

Budget pressures caused by the escalating cost of the fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq are only part of the reason for TSAT's woes. Factions inside the Pentagon want additional funding for existing, less-costly satellite designs. Commercial satellite operators, meanwhile, argue they can satisfy much of the military's projected need for satellite capacity. Still another group of Pentagon and industry experts, led by Marine Gen. James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is championing smaller, faster-to-launch satellites as well as greater use of unmanned aircraft able to supplement satellite-communication networks.

If the first TSAT launch is pushed back to 2019 or 2020, the project's opponents will have extra time to fight for alternatives. Officials at Boeing, Northrop and Lockheed worry that budget and policy turmoil could prompt the Air Force to request new bids for the contract for the project's first phase. The Pentagon already has spent \$1 billion to develop program technologies, and Mr. Young said Air Force managers have spent "a lot of time doing the front-end technology work" and establishing "strong and independent assessment and cost-estimating" systems.

Given the Pentagon's earlier litany of satellite-manufacturing woes, such efforts may not be enough to fully regain the confidence of lawmakers. Air Force Brig. General Ellen Pawlikowski said at an industry conference last month that "we're still going to continue to stumble" as a result of past mistakes, but steps to improve program

discipline are under way "so we can be more responsible buyers and partners."

USA Today
December 26, 2007
Pg. 2

16. Army Eyes Isolated Nuclear Site In S.C. For Battle Exercises

By Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The military is looking for a few good acres — very dark ones.

The Army has its night-vision goggles focused on the huge tract of federal land that comprises the Savannah River nuclear complex in the southwestern portion of the state. It wants to train light infantry units in battle exercises there that may include Army, Navy and Air Force Special Operations Forces.

The plan was announced last month by the National Environmental Protection Act compliance officer at the Savannah River site. The federal government is required by law to announce proposed changes in its land use and seek public comment.

The exercises could involve anywhere from a handful of troops to 4,000 soldiers from combat teams, the announcement said.

The complex's isolation and the fact that only 10% of its 310 square miles is in use make it attractive to the military, as does its challenging terrain, said Jim Guisti, a Department of Energy spokesman. "We have lots of swamps, timberland and areas intersected by some roadways," he said.

The complex is located along 14 miles of the Savannah River about 10 miles southeast of Augusta, Ga. The land was purchased in the 1950s as the government cleared out small communities to make way for five nuclear reactors and sites for building components for nuclear warheads.

After the Cold War, the

facility sharply reduced its workforce and shut down the reactors. Its mission has switched to transforming old weapons-grade plutonium into nuclear fuel.

James Hudgins, an Army spokesman at Fort Gordon, across the Savannah River in Georgia, said another draw for the military could be the site's darkness, as there are no major cities nearby.

"Its real advantage is that it has low ambient light," Hudgins said. He said there are "drop zones" on the site that could be used by troops with night-vision goggles and special scopes on their weapons to help them see in the dark.

Steve Siegfried, a retired two-star general who was commander at Fort Jackson from 1991 to 1994, said training military forces along the crowded East Coast is tough because of the encroachment of population. "Trying to find land that is undeveloped is a very difficult task," he said.

Before the new training could begin, an environmental assessment must be conducted and the Energy Department would evaluate whether to approve the Army's request, Guisti said. The training would not begin before early 2009.

He said the only military exercises that have taken place at the complex in the past were for security purposes.

No heavy tracked vehicles such as tanks would be driven, nor would "live fire" or real bullets and armaments be used during the maneuvers, Hudgins said. He said the Army has promised not to enter environmentally sensitive areas on the site.

New York Times
December 26, 2007
Pg. 27

17. Driver Rams Into Home

FORT WORTH (AP) — A man crashed his car into the secretary of the Army's kitchen

over the weekend here and then shot himself to death a short time later. The secretary, Pete Geren, said Tuesday that he did not know the man, who lived a block away.

Mr. Geren also said he did not think his house had been singled out on Sunday by the driver, Edward McKee, who the police said walked to his own garage after the crash and shot himself in the head.

No one in the Geren house was injured.

Chicago Tribune
December 25, 2007

18. Father's Leave Is Extended

As child lay in ICU, Army initially told GI to return to duty

By James Janega, Tribune staff reporter

In what was either a Christmas Eve gift -- or the result of a logistical snafu -- an Army unit in Iraq said Monday it had decided to extend the personal leave of a sergeant whose newborn son is in neonatal intensive care in Indiana.

Sgt. Chris Williams, 24, who has five months to go on his second tour in Iraq, now has until Friday to report for duty in the United States, after which he will be shipped back to his unit in Iraq's volatile Diyala province near Baghdad.

He had made sure his 18-day leave to Crown Point, Ind., coincided with the due date of his son, Gabriel. But days after Gabriel was born Dec. 18, the 10-pound infant got a lung infection that requires a respirator and constant care. A hospital spokeswoman said it is unclear when the boy will go home.

Amid the stress of a sick child, a faraway war and the holidays, Williams and his wife, LeeAnn, have spent the last week living in a hotel and huddled around an incubator, able to hold their newborn son for only 20 minutes every three hours as they feed him.

Standing out in the crisis

has been the kindness of a national charity leader who e-mailed an offer to help defray medical costs, a retired steelworker who sent chocolates to the Williamses, and hotel managers who have refused payment while the Williams' child is in Munster Community Hospital across the street.

Some of the confusion about the extension arose because Williams' commanding officer has been out on combat operations, said 4th Stryker Brigade spokesman Maj. Shawn Garcia. When Williams' company commander returned to base and learned of the sergeant's plight, he extended the soldier's leave, Garcia said.

"That's definitely good to hear," Williams said Monday, as he and his wife juggled feedings, families and Christmas. "It has its good points. I have a baby now, and I was able to spend it with him, even though he was in the hospital."

Williams was due to return Dec. 22, just after his newborn's illness appeared. His request to extend the leave was granted and then seemingly rescinded last week. And it was unclear if the Army technically considered him AWOL, said Williams' family, who had been calling congressmen and local newspapers for help.

The only official word they had to go on was a message on Williams' home answering machine from a platoon leader in Iraq, urging him to return quickly.

With mounting anxiety, Williams bought a plane ticket that would get him back to Ft. Lewis, Wash., on Friday, Dec. 28 -- the soonest he could find an open seat, he said.

On Monday, Garcia said Williams' return date had been moved to Dec. 28 all along.

"We take the welfare of our soldiers and their families very seriously. The medical condition of Sgt. Williams' newborn son and the emotional well-being of his family were

definite factors in the chain of command's decision to extend Sgt. Williams' leave," Garcia said.

If conditions do not change for the better, Williams can request another extension, said Capt. Terassa Pearson, spokeswoman for Task Force Iron, the unit responsible for the sprawling and turbulent region north of Baghdad.

Though seemingly healthy at birth, Gabriel Douglas Williams developed a lung infection that has had him in intensive care for days. One of his doctors, Kongiet Thaera, said the next few days could be critical for the young boy, and he advised the first-time father to remain close by.

On Monday, the child was still being given oxygen and was being treated with antibiotics, hospital spokeswoman Mylinda Cane said.

With word that his Army unit -- Aero Troop of the 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment -- did not consider him absent without leave, Williams said he had begun to consider more mundane holiday matters.

He and his wife both had families nearby. They were thinking of visiting each family in the morning. Or perhaps inviting both to visit them briefly at the hotel.

Or perhaps -- most likely -- just staying close to their son.

Hopefully, Gabriel will come home this week.

And if all goes well, Sgt. Williams will go back to war.

San Diego Union-Tribune
December 26, 2007

Today's Local News

19. Uniting Wounded Warriors And Their Families

Travel fund started by 3 Marine wives

By Linda McIntosh

While their husbands were deployed, several Marine wives at Camp Pendleton came up with an idea to help

wounded Marines coming back from Iraq.

Knowing firsthand how important it is for families to visit their wounded Marines, but also knowing that not everyone has the means to cover the costs, the women each gave \$100 to start a fund to help military families from across the country visit Marines in the hospital.

That was the humble beginning of the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund 3½ years ago. Since then the nonprofit has given \$16 million to help wounded Marines and their families.

For its efforts, the charity received the Spirit of Hope Award last month in a ceremony at the Pentagon.

The award, established by the Hope Family Foundation in honor of the late entertainer Bob Hope's United Service Organizations work, is given to organizations and individuals "who embody the values of the men and women of the military: duty, honor, courage, loyalty, commitment and integrity."

Karen Guenther and Wendy Lethin, co-founders of the Semper Fi Fund, accepted the award from the Army's chief of staff, Gen. George Casey Jr. Gen. James Conway, commandant of the Marine Corps, represented the Corps as the award was presented.

Previous award recipients include former President George H.W. Bush; John Glenn, the former astronaut and Ohio senator; and presidential candidate and former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani. The awards are on display at the Spirit of Hope exhibit at the Pentagon.

"The medal is beautiful and the award is wonderful, but to see the name of our fund there in the Spirit of Hope exhibit was an honor," said Lethin, the fund's director of donor development, who is based in the Wounded Warrior Center at Camp Pendleton.

The nonprofit has grown in dollars and scope since its

inception in May 2004. The focus has expanded from helping cover travel costs to providing assistance during rehabilitation.

"The need is greater than ever even if the casualty rate is down because there are more needs for Marines transitioning back into the community," Lethin said.

The nonprofit helps with expenses of modifying a car or home for those who have lost limbs and buying adaptive equipment. The fund also has pitched in for families who lost jobs while trying to be at the bedside of a Marine. It has given 6,000 grants to military families.

The fund has grown through donations from community groups, individuals and businesses, and prudent management, Lethin said.

Lethin said raising \$1 costs 3 cents. Overhead has been 5.5 percent on average since the fund started.

"With all the (negative) things you hear about charities these days, there are good ones, and we are proud to be among them," Lethin said.

Norfolk Virginian-Pilot
December 24, 2007

20. Navy Rescues 7 Mariners On Raft In Arabian Gulf

By Steve Stone, The Virginian-Pilot

Seven mariners who had been adrift in a raft for two days in the Arabian Gulf after their small boat broke apart in rough seas were rescued Sunday by U.S. Navy ships.

Crew members from the carrier Truman and the fast combat support ship Arctic recovered and cared for the four Pakistani and three Indian mariners.

The incident occurred while the Norfolk-based Truman was conducting a "replenishment-at-sea," receiving supplies from the Arctic, said Petty Officer 2nd Class Bobby Northnagle, a

Navy spokesman aboard the Truman.

After the ships received a call for assistance, the vessels performed an "emergency breakaway" because they had been linked. The Earle, N.J.-based Arctic, operated by the Navy's Military Sealift Command, then sent aloft two MH-60S helicopters to the scene. A rescue swimmer was dropped to the water to recover the mariners.

Once taken up to the helicopter, they were flown to the Truman for medical treatment and were given food and water.

"All are currently in good condition and awaiting transfer back to the United Arab Emirates," Northnagle said.

He said the small vessel they had been aboard, a dhow, was carrying cargo from Dubai when it encountered rough seas and its keel broke.

"When the vessel started taking on too much water to remain afloat, the mariners abandoned ship into a life raft, where they remained for two days," Northnagle said.

The Truman and the Arctic are in the Arabian Gulf as part of an ongoing rotation to support maritime security operations in the region intended to ensure the safety of shipping in international waters.

New York Times
December 26, 2007
Pg. 10

21. Russia: Ballistic Missile Test-Fired

By Reuters

A Russian submarine in the Barents Sea successfully test-fired a new ballistic missile, hitting a target on the Kamchatka Peninsula on Russia's Pacific coast minutes later, the Defense Ministry said. The RSM-54, or Sineva, is a hybrid ballistic missile that in its final stages becomes a modified cruise missile. In that guise, the missile can elude antimissile systems that rely on a ballistic trajectory for their

calculations. The launching was the second such test-firing of the Sineva in less than a week. Officials also said a land-launched RS-24 missile with multiple warheads had been successfully test-fired from the Plesetsk range in northern Russia. Russia said it had also successfully launched a rocket carrying the last three satellites for a navigation system to rival the United States' Global Positioning System. The military-run Glonass mapping system works over most of Russia and is expected to cover the globe by the end of 2009, once all its 24 navigational satellites are operating.

Washington Times
December 26, 2007
Pg. 1

22. Afghan Rebels' Arms Suppliers Assailed

Rocket mars Canadian's visit
By Betsy Pisik, The Washington Times

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Canadian Defense Minister Peter Mackay last night accused Pakistan and Iran of supplying weapons to insurgents, only half an hour before a rocket disrupted his Christmas game of field hockey with the troops here.

Witnesses described a plume of smoke and a column of orange flame in the direction of the impact, which was audible from a mile away.

Elsewhere, two European diplomats who went to one of Afghanistan's most volatile regions have been asked to leave the country, wire agencies reported.

A Briton working for the European Union and an Irishman working for the United Nations were accused of posing a threat to national security, officials and diplomats said.

Reuters news agency, citing local news portals, reported that they may have visited the Taliban insurgent stronghold of Helmand

recently and might have met with senior tribal elders with close links to the Taliban — or even insurgent leaders themselves.

Helmand is the heart of Afghanistan's drug-producing poppy industry, and the European Union and United Nations have a key role in the British-led eradication program.

Yesterday's attack was the second time Mr. Mackay has been targeted on a visit to southern Afghanistan, where 2,600 Canadian troops are leading the area's security and rehabilitation efforts.

In early November, militants narrowly missed Mr. Mackay, again traveling with Chief of Army Staff Gen. Rick Hillier, on his visit to a military outpost eight miles west of Kandahar. Two rockets landed near his convoy, but no one was injured in the attack.

Insurgents have impeded NATO efforts to bring development and security to the country, largely by aiming rocket and bomb attacks on soldiers and sympathetic locals.

The Afghans "live in a very tough neighborhood here," Mr. Mackay told a small group of predominantly Canadian reporters yesterday evening. "Let's not forget they have very negative influence coming in from other countries, Pakistan and certainly Iran in particular."

Ottawa, he said, has already protested to Iranian officials over the export of weapons or bomb components.

"We are very concerned that weapons are coming in from Iran and very concerned that these weapons are going to the insurgency and keep this issue alive," Mr. Mackay said. "We have certainly made our views to the Iranian government about this known."

It was the first time a Canadian official has blamed Tehran for sending weapons or permitting their transfer to Afghanistan to be used against coalition forces.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates expressed similar concerns during a visit to Afghanistan earlier this month.

Mr. Gates said Washington has "good evidence" that Iran is supplying militias with weapons and funds to challenge international forces operating here with U.N. Security Council authorization.

The Canadian troops are trying to stabilize Afghanistan's tumultuous southern sectors, including the Taliban's home base of Kandahar. Canadian forces have already taken 73 casualties, and popular support for the war has dropped to barely half the country.

The Canadian government has authorized troops for Afghanistan until 2009, although the Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper hopes to extend the mission until at least 2011.

Mr. Gates last week chastised NATO nations for not sending more troops and resources to secure and rebuild Afghanistan.

Yesterday's attack came shortly after Mr. Mackay, Gen. Hillier and U.S. Ambassador to Canada David Wilkins had dished out turkey dinner to troops — a holiday tradition echoed on military bases around the world since World War II.

Mr. Wilkins said he came to Afghanistan to thank the Canadian soldiers for their efforts to restore security to the Afghan people.

New York Times
December 26, 2007
Pg. 5

23. Afghanistan To Expel 2 Envoys, Citing Threats To Its Security

KABUL, Afghanistan (Agence France-Presse) — Afghanistan has ordered a high-level European Union official and a United Nations staff member to leave the country, accusing them of

threatening national security, government and diplomatic officials said Tuesday.

The two men were declared unwelcome in the country, apparently after reports said that they had met with Taliban insurgents, a European diplomat said.

The office of President Hamid Karzai had at first announced at a news conference that the two had been arrested.

A spokesman, Hodayun Hamidzada, later said that the two, whom he did not identify, had been asked to leave the country. Another official said that two of the men's Afghan colleagues had been arrested.

"The foreign nationals have been declared persona non grata, and their Afghan colleagues have been arrested and are being investigated," Mr. Hamidzada said.

He said his earlier statement that the two foreigners were in custody resulted from a misunderstanding, but he insisted that the government still believed that they were a threat to national security.

A European diplomat, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the men had been given two days to leave, but the United Nations Mission here said it was not aware of any deadline.

The two men had been accused of "having had contacts with the armed opposition out of the knowledge of the government," the diplomat said. "Afghans claim they have documents proving these guys had contacts with the Taliban but have not given any proof."

The United Nations Mission said it was not sure on what basis the government had made the accusations.

"The government has not made clear its justification for this action, and we are trying to clarify this misunderstanding," said a spokesman, Aleem Siddique. "We have no reason to believe that there is any justification for such a

" He said that the United Nations official was British and that the European Union staff member was Irish.

An Afghan Foreign Ministry official said the men had been asked to leave because they had done something "not in their mandate."

Britain is one of the main countries helping Afghanistan recover after the Taliban rulers were ousted in an American-led invasion in 2001.

In December 2006, an aide to the Briton who was then the commander of NATO troops in Afghanistan was arrested on charges of passing secrets to "the enemy," reportedly Iran. The aide, Daniel James, who was born in Iran, denied the accusations. He is to go on trial in February.

London Daily Telegraph
December 26, 2007

24. Britain In Secret Talks With The Taliban

By Thomas Harding and Tom Coghlan

Agents from MI6 entered secret talks with Taliban leaders despite Gordon Brown's pledge that Britain would not negotiate with terrorists, The Daily Telegraph can disclose.

Officers from the Secret Intelligence Service staged discussions, known as "jirgas", with senior insurgents on several occasions over the summer.

An intelligence source said: "The SIS officers were understood to have sought peace directly with the Taliban with them coming across as some sort of armed militia. The British would also provide 'mentoring' for the Taliban."

The disclosure comes only a fortnight after the Prime Minister told the House of Commons: "We will not enter into any negotiations with these people."

Opposition leaders said that Mr Brown had "some explaining to do".

The Government was

apparently prepared to admit that the talks had taken place but Gordon Brown was thought to have "bottled out" just before Prime Minister's Questions on Dec 12, when he made his denial instead.

It is thought that the Americans were extremely unhappy with the news becoming public that an ally was negotiating with terrorists who supported the September 11 attackers.

The delicate balance in Afghanistan was underlined as it emerged that two diplomats had been ordered by the Kabul government to leave the country after allegations that they had met Taliban insurgents without the administration's knowledge.

The pair, a top European Union official and a United Nations staff member, were declared "persona non grata" and said to be "threatening national security".

They are both Afghan experts who have been working in the country since the 1980s. They are in their forties and cannot be named. One man works as a political adviser to the European Union while the other is employed as a political adviser to the UN mission in Kabul.

One of the men described the charges as "banal and preposterous" and said he hoped the Afghan government would quickly drop its threat to deport them.

MI6's meetings with the Taliban took place up to half a dozen times at houses on the outskirts of Lashkahr and in villages in the Upper Gereshk valley, to the north-east of Helmand's main town.

The compounds were surrounded by a force of British infantry providing a security cordon.

To maintain the stance that President Hamid Karzai's government was leading the negotiations the clandestine meetings took place in the presence of Afghan officials.

"These meetings were with

up to a dozen Taliban or with Taliban who had only recently laid down their arms," an intelligence source said. "The impression was that these were important motivating figures inside the Taliban."

The Prime Minister had denied reports of talks with the Taliban under questioning from David Cameron, the Tory leader, in Parliament.

Liam Fox, the shadow defence secretary said: "If this turns out to be untrue the Prime Minister will have some explaining to do to the British public."

Britain has said it would support efforts by the Afghan government to negotiate with tribal fighters now supporting the Taliban - but only if they embraced democracy.

Senior Government sources have claimed that the only negotiations with the Taliban were attempts by President Karzai to persuade them to change sides.

Christian Science Monitor
December 26, 2007

25. Sino-Indian Army Exercises Bring Two Asian Powers Closer

Forty-five years after a border war, the two nations begin to collaborate on security.

By Mark Sappenfield and Anuj Chopra

NEW DELHI and PUNE, INDIA--From Washington to Tokyo, the world has increasingly looked to India as a potential counterweight to China's rising might. During the past week, however, the world's two most populous countries - which fought a war in 1962 - have taken an unprecedented step toward becoming better friends.

The decision to hold joint Army exercises, ending tomorrow, in China's Yunnan Province, is admittedly a small measure. But it is the first time the two armies have cooperated in such a way, and it comes on the heels of rapidly expanding Sino-Indian ties in business and politics.

No one suggests that India and China are on the verge of an alliance. But experts here also dismiss the notion that India must set itself up as a Chinese adversary. On the contrary, they say, events like this week's exercise show that India and China are slowly improving relations - a trend which is likely to accelerate.

"Many who view China as a long-term threat would like to claim India in an attempt to contain China," says Army Lt. Gen. Satish Nambiar (ret.), head of the United Services Institution, a Delhi think tank. "But that is not in our own interests."

For the past 45 years, Sino-Indian relations have been overshadowed by the 1962 war. China still claims nearly all of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh as Chinese territory. Yet this week's Army exercise signifies a growing desire to find common ground.

"This indicates that India's growing military ties with the US will not affect the process of confidence building with China - we can achieve a lot together," says an Indian defense official, who asked that his name be withheld because he was not authorized to speak to the media. "It's time to bury the ghosts of 1962."

Economic ties led to security

This being the first Army exercise between the two countries, it has been small. Only 95 Indian soldiers have traveled to Yunnan Province, where they are participating in counterterrorism drills. But the joint exercise is expected to become an annual event, helping each side become better acquainted with the other.

"These are building blocks being put in place," says Rahul Bedi of Jane's, a London-based military analysis firm. "It's a part of the learning process."

In many ways, the military is only now acknowledging the shift. Chinese Premier Hu Jintao visited New Delhi last year to explore the idea of

establishing freer trade with India.

Indeed, more than military exercises or ministerial meetings, it is economics that has recast the relations between India and China. Trade between the two countries surpassed \$11.4 billion in 2007 – up from only \$250 million in 1991, according to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. It grew by half in the first four months of 2007, and forecasts suggest trade could hit \$40 billion in the next three years. China could even eclipse the US as India's largest trading partner in the near future, with two-way trade projected to reach \$100 billion in the years following 2010.

As evidence of how economics has already suppressed some grievances, China agreed to reopen the strategic Nathu La pass to border trade last year – a move that effectively accepted the state of Sikkim as a part of India.

In closer Sino-Indian ties, Sen He, managing director of Sany Heavy Industry, sees only opportunity. For the past three years, Sany has been exporting machines such as conveyer equipment to Indian firms. After selling more than 700 machines, the company decided to invest \$60 million to build a factory near Pune. The operation, scheduled for completion next year, will be the first Chinese-owned major manufacturing plant in India.

"India's economy is booming ... and the construction market is flourishing," says Mr. Sen. "There is a big demand for our product."

Meanwhile, major Indian corporations such as Ranbaxy pharmaceuticals and Videocon electronics have opened operations in China.

Cooperation and competition

The business deals are counterpoints to the economic competition likely to grow between the two Asian powers

– most notably over natural resources. "There will be more instances of cooperating [than competing]," says Jabin Jacob, an analyst at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, a security think tank in Delhi.

India and China "are beginning to understand they can compete and cooperate at the same time," he adds.

It is a lesson the military is learning, too – yet with a clear sense of caution. Much about China still worries India. China recently invested huge amounts of money in its military. India responded by increasing its efforts to build longer-range missiles. "That is China-centric," says Mr. Bedi of Jane's.

Any attempt to match Chinese spending "would be a disaster," adds General Nambiar. "But we must be able to maintain a capability that is a deterrent to China."

To that end, India is building 72 roads into the remote border area with China and moving more of its airpower to a nearby state – hoping to counter similar and more robust moves by China on the other side of the border. India has also participated in a massive five-nation naval exercise in the Malacca Strait – an exercise that experts say was intended to send a "hands off" message to China.

China's continuing support of Pakistan – and its reported role in helping Pakistan build a nuclear bomb – remains a point of contention, as well. For these reasons, experts say, there is a limit to the possibilities for Sino-Indian military cooperation. But as memories of the 1962 war dissipate, a new openness is emerging. Says Nambiar: "We've come a long way since then."

USA Today
December 26, 2007

Pg. 2

26. Heir To North Korea's Helm Not

Apparent, Analysts Say

Among Kim Jong Il's three sons, none seems clear choice to 'win hearts of people'

By Paul Wiseman, USA Today

SEOUL — The contenders all have potential weaknesses. One goes by the alias "Fat Bear" and keeps embarrassing the family. One might be too wimpy, one too young.

Meet the cast of North Korea's "My Three Sons" — one of whom is probably destined to succeed their father, Kim Jong Il, as the unquestioned leader of an impoverished, isolated, nuclear-armed land.

On the southern side of the Demilitarized Zone, South Koreans voted last week for a new president. On the northern side, the succession process is considerably murkier — to the extent that North Koreans are forbidden from even talking about who might one day replace "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il, says Andrei Lankov, a North Korea watcher at Kookmin University in Seoul.

Kim Jong Il is 66, and the guesswork has begun about who will eventually replace him and whether a third generation of Kims can rise to power. (Kim Jong Il took over after the 1994 death of his father, dictator Kim Il Sung.)

The lives of the three sons are largely a mystery to the outside world, and even published pictures are hard to come by. Still, there is hope among North Korea watchers that the next Kim will be more enlightened than the current ruler, a diminutive man known for his pompadour, beige jumpsuits and taste for gourmet food.

"Reforms will take place for sure," says former South Korean intelligence analyst Sohn Kwang Joo, now managing editor at the *Daily NK*, a website that follows events in North Korea. "They want to maintain their dynasty for three generations. But they don't know whether the nation will accept it. So they need to win the hearts of the people."

The contenders:

Kim Jong Nam, 36. He's Kim Jong Il's eldest son, which would seem to give him an edge in a Confucian society that values seniority. But his pedigree is tainted by illegitimacy. His mother was Song Hye Rim, an actress who had a lengthy relationship with Kim Jong Il but never married him. "He was raised in the shadows. He does not have the network" of supporters he'd need to consolidate his rule, says Cheong Seong Chang, North Korea specialist at the Sejong Institute, a Seoul think tank.

Jong Nam has other liabilities. "He has health problems. He is grossly overweight," Lankov says. Jong Nam embarrassed his father when he was caught in 2001 trying to enter Japan with a fake passport under the Chinese name Pang Xiong - or "Fat Bear." He told Japanese authorities he intended to visit Tokyo Disneyland. "Since then, it's been clear he and Kim Jong Il don't have a smooth father-son relationship," Sohn says. "From then on, he could not go back to North Korea. He is wandering around China and Central Asia."

Sohn says Jong Nam has been telling almost anyone who will listen that he is first in line to succeed his father.

Kim Jong Chul, 26. His mother was Kim Jong Il's wife, Koh Young Hee. Jong Chul attended boarding school in Switzerland, where he learned several foreign languages and became an NBA fan. He was a popular student who once performed an act of chivalry, carrying an ailing female classmate to a medical center, Cheong says. Jong Chul also was caught on video attending an Eric Clapton concert in Germany last year.

After returning to North Korea, Jong Chul attended a military university, then took a well-placed job in the Korean Workers' Party's Central Committee — a sign, Cheong says, that he is being groomed

for power.

Another sign: Five years ago, North Korean media began promoting a cult of personality around his mother, Koh - just as they once did with Kim Jong Il's mother. "The North is trying to appoint Kim Jong Chul as successor," Hwang Jang Yop, the highest-ranking North Korean official ever to defect, said in 2003. "The successor should be the offspring of the king's beloved. Kim Jong Il ... loved Koh most of all." (Koh died in 2004.)

But in his memoirs of his years working in Kim Jong Il's kitchens, Japanese sushi chef Kenji Fujimoto said the North Korean dictator dismissed Kim Jong Chul's potential, saying he was "no good because he is like a little girl."

Cheong is skeptical about Fujimoto's account and is convinced that Jong Chul "is very likely to be the one." He also believes that Jong Chul's international exposure would make him more likely to open North Korea to the outside world. After all, he says, the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping (who had studied in Paris) reformed China after succeeding Mao Zedong (who hardly left China).

Kim Jong Woon, 23 or 24, Jong Chul's little brother. Fujimoto claimed that Kim Jong Il favored his youngest son because he was tough and regarded strangers with steely-eyed suspicion. South Korea's Yonhap News Agency has reported that Jong Woon's mother, Koh, had ordered high-ranking North Korean officials to start calling him "the Morning Star General" in an apparent bid to put him in the succession race.

Lankov says Kim Jong Il is tardy in arranging a successor. His father, Kim Il Sung, was 61 when he anointed Jong Il as his political heir. Lankov says Kim Jong Il should have made his choice years ago, giving the heir apparent a chance to pack the bureaucracy with supporters

and to purge those of dubious loyalty.

Lankov has a theory for Kim Jong Il's indecision. He suspects that Kim Jong Il is convinced that his repressive regime won't last long once he's gone. Perhaps he reasons that it would be better for someone else to take the fall and risk ending up like the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, executed along with his wife when the end came in 1989.

"The Kim family would go down with the country," Lankov says. "Some of them might get killed. They would have no chance to keep their money. If some ambitious general presided over the collapse of his country, it would be his problem, not the Kim family's."

"Maybe Kim Jong Il is putting his family ahead of the regime," Lankov says. "Sometimes I think that is exactly what he is doing."

Pacific Daily News (Guam)
December 26, 2007

27. Guam's About-Face: Camacho Changes Tune Regarding Buildup

By Steve Limtiaco, Pacific Daily News

Two summers ago, Gov. Felix Camacho told a federal committee that Guam wants to host additional military, and that Guam's government was doing many things to accommodate civilian and military growth, including water and power projects and the opening of a new landfill.

"These are just some of the critical projects that the local government has undertaken for the benefit of every man, woman and child living on Guam today," Camacho told the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission during a July 14, 2005, hearing at a school in Los Angeles. Guam at the time was spared significant cuts during a base realignment process -- only 31 jobs here were affected -- and

Camacho was advocating greater military activity on Guam.

"And for those who will be living here in the future, we are and will continue to commence initiatives that make Guam the best possible platform for hosting military missions," he said. The military has announced plans to come here in record numbers, with as much as \$15 billion in construction spending -- and Guam's message to federal officials has shifted, with more emphasis in recent months on "unfunded federal mandates" and the adverse effect the military expansion could have on local government services and infrastructure.

Guam can't handle such a large expansion without assistance, said Alberto "Tony" Lamorena, the governor's planning director. That means direct funding or assistance in getting funding, he said.

When asked how much military expansion Guam was prepared to handle unassisted, Lamorena said no one has examined that issue.

Relabeled critical

Projects that were on the local government's to-do list for years have been relabeled as critical to the military buildup in recent presentations to federal officials.

Among the proposals is that the military "partner" in the investment for a new landfill -- a landfill that GovGuam was supposed to open months ago by federal court order, but which is years away from completion.

"We cannot be expected to cover unfunded federal mandates or other substantial requirements of this military expansion," Camacho told a cabinet-level working group during a trip to the nation's capital in late November. "We have seen the effects of such mandates in other federal programs and if these are not addressed it will hinder our ability to deliver critical services."

It is unclear what the

federal mandates will be for Guam and whether they will be funded or unfunded. Much of GovGuam's planning to date has been based on assumptions about the military impact that may or may not pan out, Lamorena said. The military's plans should be clearer by March, he said.

Still to be determined is whether the military will provide its own utilities or buy power and water from the island's existing utilities.

And the ability of Guam to tax the military construction projects could determine how much revenue it will have to prepare for the arrival of the first Marines. Lamorena said there are concerns that large military contractors won't pay taxes here, just as they haven't been paying taxes on Guam for other projects. "The only one paying taxes is the local company subcontracted by the primary contractor," he said.

Lamorena said GovGuam currently is planning for the most military impact -- additional strains on infrastructure and government services without the funding to pay for it -- but those plans will be adjusted as the military's plans for Guam are clarified next year.

Assessment

A task force created by the governor has used existing information about the expansion to determine the impact on local government services, and in November produced a "needs assessment" that proposes additional government hiring and the purchase of more vehicles, computers, buildings and equipment.

But the needs assessment is not entirely accurate and needs to be refined during the next couple of months, according to Lamorena.

He said the goal of the needs assessment was to identify the funding gap between what Guam needs due to normal population growth, about 2 percent per year, and the sudden 30-percent growth

due to the military expansion.

The Guam Police Department, however, reported that it needs to more than double its existing staff, and add new buildings and nearly 200 vehicles in order to handle the military buildup.

The department, which employs 384 people, reported that it would need 421 additional employees, at a cost of \$21 million. It also identified more than \$44 million for new buildings.

Lamorena said the reports in the needs assessment were rushed and agencies were only supposed to identify what will be needed because of the military buildup -- not existing shortfalls in government services.

The types of problems Guam will face are good problems to have because they are problems associated with economic growth, as opposed to economic depression, said retired Marine Maj. Gen. David Bice, who is in charge of the Joint Guam Program Office, which is coordinating the military expansion. "This is a problem of opportunity."

Gov. Camacho said, "The military increase will certainly change the balance and provide a more stable economy because of the presence here. But I've always made that case that, as a territory, we do not have the financial capacity to pay for this."

The governor is not alone in this position.

"I am absolutely advocating that the U.S. government assist in improving Guam's infrastructure beyond the gates of the military bases," Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo told the Pacific Daily News earlier this month. "I hope the Bush administration includes funding for these infrastructure improvements in their own budget request for fiscal 2009 and beyond."

28. Make A Mistake, And This Mannequin Dies In Battle

By Colin Nickerson, Globe Staff

CAMBRIDGE - Dr. Steve Dawson and his team are creating a dummy that will die if you don't treat it right.

Intended for training combat medics, the smart mannequin being built from scratch in his Massachusetts General Hospital lab mimics war wounds with horrifying realism, right down to blood spurting from torn arteries, sucking chest wounds, and appalling shrieks of agony.

Make a mistake treating this trauma - apply a tourniquet at the wrong spot or with the wrong pressure; fail to catch the fading pulse; waste seconds binding a gory but nonlethal wound, while missing a less-visible, deadlier injury (a common battlefield mistake) - and the dummy lapses into symptoms of shock.

Fail to arrest the shock, the dummy flatlines.

"This is a synthetic human for real training - training that simulates real wounds in real combat," said Dawson, an interventional radiologist and head of a \$2.2 million Pentagon-funded project to design an all-new Combat Medic Training System, or Comets, to use its military moniker.

The military wants a simulator that will put medics in the field with a better sense of treating traumatic injury under battle conditions - experience that medics now get mostly on the job. Dawson and his team are supposed to deliver the first Comets prototypes by August 2009. Military medical officers say the pressures of war make the need for the device especially urgent.

"Right now, we've got 4,000 medics in training at any given time," said Colonel Robert H. Vandre, director of the Army Combat Casualty Care Research Program.

Nearly all of these medics will serve in Iraq or Afghanistan. "Most casualties that are going to die, die before they get to the first doctor. Ninety percent of life-saving in combat is done by medics."

The dummy is a joint effort by MGH and the Center for Integration of Medicine and Innovative Technology, a consortium of Boston-area hospitals that focuses on areas, including military medicine, where advanced technology can improve treatment. Dawson is a pioneer of medical simulation, and a passionate advocate for the notion that dummies even more sophisticated than the Comets "medic model" should eventually be developed to train civilian doctors and nurses.

"Since ancient Egypt, doctors have been trained on live patients," he said. "Nowadays, that's almost barbarous. Medical students should learn to tie [surgical] knots or give neural injections on simulators that feel like real life - but aren't somebody's 84-year-old mother who happened to be wheeled into a teaching hospital."

Simulation is one of the fastest-growing fields in medical technology, and Dawson believes that within decades medical students, interns, and residents will do much of their training on highly realistic models, not putting hands on patients until they've mastered basic diagnostic and surgical techniques.

Since the start of the Iraq war, the Army has nearly doubled the training time for combat medics to 16 intensive weeks. Medics who complete the course have roughly the same level of skills as a civilian emergency medical technician, or ambulance medic. Training presently includes cruder or less mobile mannequins, as well as classroom and field instruction.

The Comets dummy has detachable limbs, so medics

can train on, say, an arm ripped by shrapnel, then switch limbs to train on other wounds. Imitation blood moves in synthetic veins under the "skin" at such precise pressure that when a medic taps into a vein with an IV needle, a plume of red swirls up into the tube.

Drop an IV bag, so life-saving intravenous fluid is no longer flowing by gravity, and the dummy fades out of consciousness. A femur shattered without breaking skin can cause deadly internal bleeding whose only sign is swelling of the dummy's skin in the region of the fracture. A slow reaction by medics means a DOA for the combat hospital.

"There's a reset button," said Mark Ottensmeyer, in charge of engineering the Comets dummy, which has stainless steel for bone and a tiny air compressor to do the work of the heart. "But you've lost your patient. Better to make your mistakes on a mannequin than to be calling for a body bag."

American military medicine, from the level of the "68 Whiskey" - infantry medic - to nurses and surgeons at frontline hospitals, is arguably the best in the world. But replicating the confusion of combat, where even the coolest heads can lose their bearings, is difficult.

"Training with a high-fidelity patient simulator in a realistic environment is going to increase confidence and ability when [medics] go to work under fire," Major Aaron A. Saguil, a US Army doctor in Afghanistan responsible for primary care and medic training at the NATO hospital at Kandahar Air Field, said by e-mail.

Many present-day medical training dummies are either too cumbersome - \$200,000-plus devices connected by coaxial cable to a computer requiring a technician to enter commands to generate each symptom - or too dumb. Others, notably "CPR Annie," are great for

practicing rote techniques, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation, but not especially versatile.

The MGH dummy is being designed tough so it can be used in stateside training under an array of field conditions, whether half-immersed in a swamp or in a blown-out Humvee in the dark of night. Medics working with flashlights and sense of touch will probe synthetic skin that responds like real skin and learn to bandage shrapnel or bullet wounds against the backdrop of training field explosions and weapons fire.

"It's rugged and simple," said Ryan Bardsley, a designer on the project. "It tries to show the basic indicators of injuries with realism, no red lights or buzzers. It's to teach medics to come on the scene, assess if someone is dead or alive, get them under cover, and deliver the immediate care they'll need to be still breathing when they reach the docs and nurses."

In the Cambridge "sim" lab, designer John Cho Moore last week was building a leg using silicon of varying textures to impart the feel of muscle and subcutaneous fat. "It's got to feel and respond exactly like an actual leg," he said. "When the medic ties a tourniquet, it's no good if the fake leg compresses to the bone, like foam rubber."

Computer work by Paul Neumann ensures that after medics are done, the dummy will download what the military calls an "after-action report" - telling what happened physiologically, how treatment went right, where treatment went wrong.

Fine computer tuning also ensures the dummy's screams and utterances will coordinate with actual symptoms. So, for instance, when it responds to proper treatment, and its eyes flutter back to consciousness, it will know to express the fervent wish of every wounded soldier: "I don't want to die," groans the prototype combat mannequin. "Get me the hell

out of here."

Baltimore Sun
December 26, 2007

29. Clothing Contains Tourniquets For Those Going In Harm's Way

By Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va.--As an Army surgeon in the Middle East, Dr. Keith Rose watched a colleague bleed to death when a truck in his convoy was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade.

Rose could not get his comrade a tourniquet, which could have helped control the bleeding of his wounded leg, and sat among the mangled wreckage and talked with him as he took his last breath.

"It really kind of frustrated me," Rose said.

Once he returned to the United States, Rose approached BlackHawk, a provider of military and law enforcement gear, with an idea to create clothes with built-in tourniquets.

The system being tested for use in military uniforms, called Warrior Wear, has eight tourniquets - two in each sleeve and pant leg.

Tourniquets fashioned from straps that look like those on backpacks are sewn into the clothing, and the straps are concealed beneath a fabric fastener.

"No matter how good the tourniquet is, if you can't get it on the person at the right time, it doesn't work," said Rose, who does tactical medicine consultation and medical work overseas.

"It's something that is so basic, so cost-effective and so overwhelmingly life-changing," he said.

The Norfolk-based company said the clothing should be available for retail around the end of March. It is expected to retail for less than \$200, but the cost to the military would depend on such factors as volume.

Military officials agree that having readily accessible

tourniquets is important.

"Tourniquets have allowed many people with devastating injuries to come back that in another time and another place would have died," said Col. Patricia R. Hastings, director of the Army's Department of Combat Medic Training, based at Fort Sam Houston in Texas.

"If you can save a medic a few minutes of time so he can concentrate on saving your life ... it has great possibilities," Hastings said.

And with the concept of battlefields changing, Rose said, the system is more vital than ever.

"The way wars are fought now ... there's no defined lines of engagement," Rose said. "The average cook could be hit with a rocket attack while he's carrying potatoes to the mess hall."

Advances in body armor have made protecting the core of a body easier, but more than 60 percent of injuries in military and law enforcement conflicts today are to the extremities, said Terry Naughton, director of industrial security at BlackHawk.

Naughton said 10 percent of deaths are from injuries in which blood loss was uncontrollable.

"We are confident that the day that this hits the field that lives will be saved," Naughton said. "And if we save one person, we've done our job."

BlackHawk was founded in 1993 by Mike Noell, a former Navy SEAL who fought in the first Persian Gulf war.

The company, which has developed more than 2,500 products for military, law enforcement and the outdoor sporting community, has grown to about 250 employees.

It expects to add 100 more within the next year.

Boston Globe
December 26, 2007

30. Raytheon: Army Aware Of Missile's Flaw Firm being sued in pilot's

death

By Ross Kerber, Globe Staff

Army officials were aware that the Raytheon-built Patriot air-defense system had difficulty distinguishing between friendly and enemy aircraft but deployed the missiles in the Iraq war after deciding the system was needed to protect troops, a Raytheon Co. executive stated in a recent legal filing.

The statement was filed in a lawsuit brought by the family of a Navy pilot who was killed by a Patriot missile while flying over Iraq in 2003. The declaration marks a rare acknowledgment of problems with a mainstay of the Army's air-defense arsenal and underscores what Raytheon says is a key issue in the case - whether a defense contractor can be sued over the way soldiers use its products in the heat of combat.

Traditionally, defense contractors have been shielded from many claims by the "political questions doctrine," which bars courts from second-guessing some decisions by troops or other government representatives. Raytheon has raised this doctrine in the case filed in federal court in Boston by the family of Navy pilot Nathan D. White, who allege that the company was negligent in the design of the system and that its weaknesses were well known prior to the accident.

At a Dec. 19 hearing, US District Court Judge Richard G. Stearns denied a motion by Raytheon to dismiss the case, saying it raised "fascinating issues" that the family deserved the chance to explore.

"I have no doubt there are political questions in this case," Stearns said from the bench, but whether they "overwhelm the claims" is a question that needs further review.

A Raytheon spokesman said it would be inappropriate to comment on the litigation, and referred questions to the Army. A spokesman for the Army, which is not being sued,

also declined to discuss the case. The family has previously sent a letter to the company seeking a \$20 million settlement, though no figure was given in the lawsuit.

Just how much confidence military officers should have in the Patriot missile has been an issue for years. Originally designed as a ground defense against aircraft, Patriot missiles and their launchers gained fame during the Gulf War of 1991 when they were pressed into service to defend against Iraqi Scud missiles.

However, later reviews forced the Army to scale back its claims Patriot had a near-perfect record shooting down incoming targets in that conflict, and led to heavy spending on upgrades. When Patriot missile batteries were deployed to protect troops in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, they destroyed nine incoming missiles but also were involved in three friendly-fire incidents that killed three allied airmen, including both fliers of a British Tornado jet.

In the other fatal incident, White, a lieutenant from Texas, was returning from a mission with a wingman when his F/A-18 was shot down by a Patriot missile near Karbala, Iraq, on April 2, 2003. Later military reviews put blame for the accident on weaknesses with the Patriot system itself, poor training, and poor communications. One problem was the frequent appearance on Patriot radar screens of "ghost tracks," or targets that didn't exist, a report found. The suit states that the malfunction that caused Patriot to misidentify friendly targets as enemies "occurred with alarming frequency and were well-known to Raytheon" prior to White's death.

The Army and Raytheon say they have made more improvements since then, but White's family has sought more details, such as what officials knew of the Patriot's weaknesses before the war.

Raytheon submitted the

declaration by Raytheon executive Daniel Roy Kirby to bolster its argument that the Army knew of problems with the Patriot. From 2001 to 2005, Kirby was an Army officer at Fort Bliss, Texas, center of the services' air-defense operations. He is now a director at Raytheon's Integrated Defense Systems division in Tewksbury.

In his three-page statement, Kirby said, "As would be expected of any weapon system, the Army has identified, evaluated, and reported on numerous operational issues associated with the Patriot System. Prior to April 2, 2003, the Army was aware that there had been documented instances in which the Patriot System in training, test, and/or combat failed to perform to operational requirements, including specifically its misidentification of friendly vehicles as enemy targets.

"Despite this knowledge, the Army determined that the Patriot System is mission critical to US tactical air defense and decided to deploy the system to the battlefield, including during Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom," Kirby stated.

In a related filing, Raytheon lists a number of questions it says are best left to military officers rather than courts to decide, such as whether it was right to deploy the system at all and whether crews were right to fire at White's plane when they believed they were under attack.

Raytheon also noted that on the day White was shot down the system was deployed in a novel "bounding over-watch" mode, in which one unit is set up to fire on incoming missiles when another unit moves forward. In theory, the configuration could have caused electro-magnetic interference with Patriot radars that contributed to the accident.

"It is impossible to pare through the case without

encountering military decisions," said Raymond Biagini, an outside attorney for Raytheon, during the Dec. 19 court hearing.

Major Thomas McCuin, an Army spokesman, said Kirby's statement was a reference to a report previously made public that described a problem with Patriot's system for distinguishing between allies and enemies. "The bottom line for me is that no weapon system is perfect, but the Patriot is the best antiaircraft/antimissile system in the world and serves a critical role in our nation's defense," McCuin wrote in an e-mail.

Philip Coyle, the Pentagon's top testing official during the Clinton administration, said Kirby's statement in the case is "a much more concrete statement than anything I've seen before" about what the company or the Army knew about Patriot prior to the accident. Coyle has said in the past that previous war games also had pointed to Patriot's problems identifying targets.

But Coyle also noted that at the time of the invasion the Army would have believed President Bush's statements that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, which could be carried by Scud missiles that Patriot missiles could defend against.

Even though Patriot was imperfect, Coyle said, "I bet the Army would say it was better than nothing."

Fort Worth Star Telegram
December 22, 2007

31. Pentagon Backs Troubled Presidential Copter Program

By Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg News

The Pentagon has rejected a recommendation by the Navy to delay the purchase and operation of a new presidential helicopter built by a team led by Lockheed Martin, according

to a budget document.

Instead, in a Dec. 17 memo, Pentagon Comptroller Tina Jonas included \$555.6 million to buy four helicopters in the next fiscal year. Navy Secretary Donald Winter, citing "consistent under-execution," recommended in August that the purchase be delayed until after 2010 and the money transferred into more development.

Jonas directed the Navy to pay for improvements to the fleet of 19 presidential helicopters, some of them 40 years old, until the new model becomes operational. The Pentagon's budget request will be scrutinized by lawmakers after the Navy said it was reorganizing the \$6.1 billion program because of projected cost growth, weight increases and delays.

None of those issues are addressed in the memo, which says the program will request \$1 billion in fiscal 2009, including \$555.6 million to buy four helicopters.

The Lockheed aircraft is based on the design of the EH101 helicopter produced by AgustaWestland, a unit of Finmeccanica SpA of Italy. Fort Worth-based Bell Helicopter would build the aircraft.

The Pentagon's decision to move ahead comes as "the White House has rebuffed proposals to significantly delay the program because the current fleet of helicopters has grown quite old and lacks important features" for the president, said Loren Thompson, a defense analyst with the Arlington, Va.-based Lexington Institute, a defense research group.

Lockheed spokeswoman Monica Hallman said the company "has received no official notification on funding decisions."

Jonas' spokesman, Lt. Col. Brian Maka, declined to comment on the decision. Kevin Wensing, a spokesman for Deputy Defense Secretary

Gordon England, said "the program is moving ahead." England met with White House officials last week to review various options, Wensing said.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution
December 26, 2007

Pg. 2C

32. Armored Vehicle Maker Shuts Down

Charleston, S.C. -- A company that makes armored military vehicles has fired most of its employees and shut down permanently, according to a report posted online Monday. Protected Vehicles Inc. told its employees in a Dec. 19 letter that it was "unable to continue production operations" and that layoffs previously thought to be temporary were now permanent, according to the report on The Post and Courier of Charleston's Web site. Protected Vehicles abruptly ceased operations earlier this month. It's unclear exactly how many people are affected by the layoffs. Protected Vehicles laid off 230 workers -- about half of its employees -- in August. The company was founded in 2005 and builds armored trucks for the U.S. military. The armored military vehicle industry is going through difficult times. The Marine Corps recently decided to buy a third fewer bomb-resistant vehicles to protect U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan from deadly roadside bombs, and some observers have said the reduced violence in Iraq may lead to fewer orders.

Wall Street Journal
December 26, 2007

Pg. 11

33. Putin's Cold War

By Leon Aron

Last Saturday Gen. Yury Baluyevsky, chief of Russia's General Staff, issued an ominous warning. Were the U.S. to launch a rocket from the missile defense system it plans to deploy in Poland to intercept Iranian rockets, it

might accidentally trigger a retaliatory attack by Russian nuclear ballistic missiles.

This was only the most recent of a series of provocative and disturbing messages from Moscow. In fact, at no time since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 has the direction of Russian policy been as troubling as it is today.

What accounts for this change? And where will it lead?

Let's first discard simplistic clichés. The most common of them postulates that when the post-Soviet, proto-democratic,

anti-communist, revolutionary Russia of the 1990s was poor, it was also meek and peaceable and willing to be a friend of the West. Now that the accursed "period of weakness" and "chaos" of the 1990s is behind it, the same explanation goes, Russia has "recovered," is "off its knees," and is "back." Back, that is, to spar and bicker with the West because ... well, because this is what a prosperous and strong Russia does.

Nonsense. A country's behavior in the world, its choice of truculence or accommodation, is not decided by accountants who calculate what the country can or cannot afford. Rather it is determined by the regime's fears and hopes, and by the leaders' notions of what their countries should strive for.

As Germany and Japan recovered from the devastation of World War II and became many times richer than they were in 1945, they grew more, not less, peaceful. They also devoted puny shares of their national income to the military -- and only after intense debate. Western Europe's equally spectacular economic resurgence has not brought back squabbling, jingoism and militarism -- and neither did South Korea's, after communist aggression and decades of authoritarianism.

In the past seven years, the trajectory of Russian foreign

policy under Vladimir Putin mirrored, and changed with, the domestic ideological and political order. It has morphed from the Gorbachev-Yeltsin search for the "path to the common European home" and integration into the world economy, to declaring that the end of the Soviet Union was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century."

Soon the Kremlin's paid and unpaid propagandists were extolling "sovereign democracy" -- a still rather "soft" authoritarianism, increasingly with nationalistic and isolationist overtones. Such exegeses, an independent Russian analyst noted, "would have been labeled as fascist, chauvinistic, anti-democratic or anti-Western during Yeltsin's term. Now such texts have become mainstream."

As the Kremlin's pronouncements grew darker and more fanciful -- including warnings that foreign evildoers are plotting to break up Russia -- Moscow's foreign policy, too, evolved: first to a cynical and omnivorous pragmatism, and then an assertive and pointedly anti-Western, especially anti-American, posture.

The formerly diverse bilateral U.S.-Russian agenda -- energy security, nuclear nonproliferation, the global war on terrorism, the containment of a resurgent, authoritarian China, Russia's integration in the global economy -- has been systematically whittled down by Moscow to where it was in the Soviet days and where the Kremlin now wants it: arms control. Suddenly pulled out of mothballs and imbued with the gravest concern for Russia's safety are all manner of the Cold War detritus.

Some of Moscow's concerns (for instance, NATO deployments increasingly close to Russia's borders) are legitimate. But the alarmist and uncompromising rhetoric, and the mode of its delivery --

shrill, public and from the very top of the Russian power structure -- have been utterly disproportionate to the rather trivial and easily resolved military essence of the issues.

The evolution of Moscow's Iran policy is particularly troubling. Until about a year ago, the Moscow-Tehran quid pro quo was straightforward. Russia defended Iran in the U.N.'s Security Council, while Iran refrained from fomenting fundamentalism and terrorism in Central Asia and the Russian North Caucasus, and spent billions of dollars on Russian nuclear energy technology and military hardware, including mobile air defense missiles, fighter jets and tanks. (At the request of the U.S., Boris Yeltsin suspended arms sales to Tehran in 1995.)

Then Russia's strategy changed from money-making, influence-peddling and diplomatic arbitrage to a far riskier brinkmanship in pursuit of a potentially enormous prize. The longer Moscow resists effective sanctions against an Iran that continues to enrich uranium -- and thus to keep the bomb option open and available at the time of its choosing -- the greater the likelihood of the situation's deteriorating, through a series of very probable miscalculations by both the U.S. and Iran, toward a full-blown crisis with a likely military solution.

As Iran's patron, Moscow would be indispensable to any settlement of such a conflict, as was the Soviet Union when it sponsored Egypt in the 1993 Yom Kippur war. And through that settlement it would get its prize.

In one fell swoop, Russia could fulfill major strategic goals: to reoccupy the Soviet Union's position as a key player in the Middle East and the only viable counterbalance to the U.S. in the region; to keep oil prices at today's astronomic levels for as long as possible by feeding the fears of

a military strike against Iran (and see them go as far as \$120-\$130 a barrel and likely higher if Iran blocks the Strait of Hormuz and disrupts the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf); and to use the West to prevent the emergence of a nuclear-armed Iran a few hundred miles from Russia's borders.

Especially frustrating for the White House is Russian foreign policy's intimate connection to the Kremlin's all-out effort to ensure a smooth transition of power, which, Dimitry Medvedev's appointment to the presidency notwithstanding, looks more and more like it will be from a presidency to a kind of Putin regency.

Creating a sense of a besieged fortress at a time of domestic political uncertainty or economic downturn to rally the people around the Kremlin and, more importantly, its current occupant, is part and parcel of the Soviet ideological tradition, which this regime seems increasingly to admire.

So between now and at least next spring, Russian foreign policy is likely to be almost entirely subservient to the Putin's regime's authoritarian, ambitious and dicey agenda. This will likely result in more nasty rhetoric from the Kremlin and further damage relations with the West, and the U.S. in particular.

Until the succession crisis is resolved (meaning, until Mr. Putin's effective leadership of the country is renewed and secured) no amount of importuning, begging or kowtowing -- or emergency trips by Condoleezza Rice to Moscow and heart-to-heart chats in Kennebunkport -- are likely to produce an ounce of good.

Let us, therefore, refrain from the ritual, silly hand-wringing and accusations on the subject of "losing" Russia. Russia is not (and never has been) ours to lose.

Back on "the never altered

circuit of its fate," to borrow from one of Robert Graves's finest poems, Russia under Mr. Putin has been doing a fine job of losing itself on its own. Resuming the Gorbachev-Yeltsin heroic labor of dismantling this circuit, and thus altering Russia's relations with the West, could be Mr. Medvedev's job -- if he wants it and is allowed to proceed.

Mr. Aron is resident scholar and director of Russian studies at the American Enterprise Institute, and author of "Russia's Revolution: Essays 1989-2006" (AEI Press, 2007).

Washington Post
December 26, 2007
Pg. 21

34. A Chance To Rein In North Korea

By Nicholas Eberstadt

Last week's presidential election in South Korea presages a sea change in that key U.S. ally's policies toward North Korea. The resounding defeat of the candidates who favored more of Seoul's all-carrot, no-stick approach to Kim Jong Il presents Washington with a horizon of new possibilities for reining in Asia's most troublesome dictator. The question now is whether the Bush foreign policy team will be adept enough to seize this opportunity.

The landslide vote, to be sure, was in large measure a rebuke of President Roh Moo-hyun's inept handling of the economy and polarizing domestic policies. Yet, taken together, the candidates who opposed the "Peace and Prosperity" policy (originally dubbed "Sunshine") toward North Korea in last Wednesday's election received more than 63 percent of the vote -- compared with 35 percent for all those who approved of it. Why the widespread discontent with "sunshine"? Because what had started as a policy of reconciliation with the North had degenerated in practice

into almost reflexive appeasement of the "Dear Leader," Kim Jong Il. Unsurprisingly, many ordinary Koreans found that kind of "sunshine" too distasteful, too embarrassing and just a bit too dangerous.

South Koreans winced as their government repeatedly abstained from U.N. votes criticizing North Korea for human rights abuses. They grumbled as they saw their tax-funded "economic cooperation" projects with the North devolve into an economic lifeline for a still-hostile government in Pyongyang. And they worried as the undisguised rift with Washington over "the North Korean threat" created unmistakable strains in the vital U.S.-South Korean alliance.

South Korea, in short, is ready for a new and more critical approach to engagement with North Korea -- and this is just what President-elect Lee Myung-bak has promised. Lee is no Cold Warrior: He styles himself as a pragmatist who judges by results. Since his election, he has signaled that restoring the health of the U.S.-South Korean alliance and achieving a genuine denuclearization of the North Korean regime are to be top foreign policy priorities. He has also served notice to Pyongyang that it can no longer count on Seoul for a "see-no-evil" spin on events in the North -- much less unconditional handouts.

There would seem to be great promise in this new attitude toward "engagement with the North" -- to say nothing of new vistas for genuine cooperation between the United States and South Korea on the multifaceted North Korea problem.

With Seoul finally willing to criticize Kim Jong Il's gulag "paradise," for example, an effective worldwide human rights campaign in the name of the North Korean people comes much closer to reality.

With a South Korean government that no longer insists on sitting on the sidelines, the Proliferation Security Initiative to interdict illicit North Korean revenue (from drug-running, counterfeiting, weapons sales and the like) stands to be much more effective -- and that much more costly to Kim Jong Il. No longer a "runaway ally," South Korea could at last join with the United States and Japan in a common policy to bring real pressure on North Korea for real denuclearization -- and to impose real penalties for noncompliance.

Today, China can depict its support for the North as joining a South Korean bandwagon. Without the cover of a seemingly all-forgiving South Korean government, China would finally be forced to make hard choices about the Kim Jong Il regime -- within the confines of the six-party talks and beyond.

But is the Bush foreign policy team ready to make use of this long-desired diplomatic windfall from South Korea?

For a variety of reasons (among them the Republicans' loss of Congress in 2006 and the situation in Iraq) the Bush team all but abandoned its previous posture toward North Korea at the end of last year. These days it appears intent on producing only "good news" on the North Korean front. "Good news" about North Korea, for its part, seems to have been defined down to meaning a nuclear deal with Kim Jong Il -- irrespective of the fine print.

If this sounds implausible, consider the actual record of U.S. diplomacy with North Korea over the past 12 months.

Early this year, the U.S. government quietly agreed to help "unfreeze" more than \$24 million in suspect North Korean funds from bank accounts in Macau. Why? Because North Korean nuclear negotiators threatened not to return to the table until their Dear Capo got his money back.

After returning to the six-party talks, the North Korean side then inked an "action plan" in February that promised to provide an accounting of its previous nuclear activities within two months. Here we are at the end of the year with no accounting -- and, so far as one can tell, no worries from the White House, either.

In September word emerged that Israeli jets had leveled a facility in Syria that from the air looked a lot like the Yongbyon nuclear reactor. The Syrian site was reputedly being developed with North Korean assistance. Yet under Washington's new rules of engagement with Pyongyang, the Bush team has scarcely whispered a word about this mysterious -- and potentially grave -- international incident.

And by the way: Have you heard from President Bush's special envoy for human rights in North Korea over the past year? Neither has anybody else.

Last week's election in South Korea should serve as a wake-up call to the Bush administration. With willing new partners in the wings in Seoul, President Bush still has the chance to register some real gains for his legacy on North Korea -- and, more important, for the security of the free world.

Nicholas Eberstadt, the Henry Wendt chair in political economy at the American Enterprise Institute, is a member of the U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea.

Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)
December 26, 2007

35. Iraqis Playing Key Role In Country's Stabilization

By Joseph Galloway

In a remarkable and rare display of both caution and good sense, no one in the Bush administration has begun doing victory laps over the good

news from Iraq.

Yes, the numbers of American troops and Iraqi civilians dying there have fallen sharply in the last six months. So have the number of roadside bombs going off and suicide car bombs detonating. Anbar province is, at the moment, relatively peaceful.

The Sunni Muslim jihadists of al-Qaida in Iraq seem to be either in retreat or on a retreat, licking their wounds and rethinking their strategy. Better yet, radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's murderous Mahdi Army militia has largely stood down as he ordered it to last August.

In Baghdad, some neighborhoods have cautiously come back to life; open-air markets are again thronged with shoppers who for so long had cowered inside their homes.

A small fraction — 20,000 or so — of the 2 million Iraqis who've fled from the terror across the borders to Syria and Jordan have begun to trickle home. Some forced by Syria's hardening attitude toward Iraqi refugees; others tempted by the good news from home.

All of this is good news; all of this is welcome news.

But everyone from our military commanders in Iraq to Defense Secretary Robert Gates to the White House and its denizens is being very careful to avoid premature celebration, and rightly so. Even Vice President Dick Cheney has avoided making any pronouncements about the insurgents being in their death throes.

It would be easy — and wrong — to claim that the temporary surge of an additional 30,000 American troops is entirely responsible for the scaling back of violence and civil war in Iraq. Beefing up our forces has helped. What's helped even more was a change of American tactics and strategy in Iraq that was four years overdue and coincided with the arrival of Gen. David Petraeus as the new U.S.

commander.

But the truth is that much of this reduction in violence is, like the violence itself, entirely homegrown and thus resistant to the analysis and understanding of foreigners.

What we do know is that Sadr's militia was, at one time, responsible for more than 60 percent of American combat deaths in Iraq.

We know that Anbar province almost overnight has ceased to be a killing field for American Marines because the local tribal sheiks had had enough of the jihadists they'd sheltered. When the jihadists began killing the sheiks themselves and imposing their idea of Islamic law — cutting off the heads of barbers, bootleggers and women not sufficiently subservient — they crossed the line.

The sheiks decided to stop their own Sunni insurgency and stop killing Americans.

They'd balked at participating in the Iraqi central government and army and police, which are almost entirely Shiite. That didn't bode well for the day when the Americans would leave and the night of the Shiite long knives would arrive, so the Sunnis began sending their sons to attempt to join the army and police. When the government turned them away, the sheiks signed up to fight with the Americans for \$300 a month, a rifle and some training.

The key decisions that have led to the reduction in the slaughter weren't made by us or by what passes for a national government in Baghdad. They were made by some of the people — both Sunni and Shiite — who were killing American troops just six months ago.

So there's reason aplenty for our leaders and commanders to avoid any victory parades, "Mission Accomplished" banners or "last throes" pronouncements and instead wait silently for the next shoe to drop. If only President Bush had known that

Iraq was harder than algebra back in 2003, maybe we could have avoided the whole thing.

Joseph L. Galloway is a military columnist for McClatchy Newspapers and a co-author of the national best-seller "We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young."

Christian Science Monitor
December 24, 2007

Pg. 2

36. Correction

A story last week about two US-run detention facilities in Iraq (Dec. 20, page 1) contained two errors. First, it incorrectly described color designations for detainees. The individuals do wear different colors, but the system is based on age -- red for juveniles and yellow for adults. Each detainee is also assigned a color for administrative purposes to indicate the threat the person poses -- red for "extremist," green for "moderate," and amber for "in transition." These colors, however, are not worn by the detainees.

Second, the story cited the wrong number of detainees being released each week by the US military. That figure should have been about 350.

Editor's Note: The article by Gordon Lubold appeared in the *Current News Early Bird*, Dec. 20, 2007.

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Featured Job: Police Officer

2008 "Sweethearts for Soldiers" Calendar

Career Training for Veterans

The American Legion Announces Legacy Run

Coalition, Legion Gave Out 1,000 Grants

Committee Examines Veterans' Suicides

Subcommittee Examines Waiting Times

Make Teaching a New Years Resolution

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Youth Leadership Conference in Atlanta

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New Museum Opens in Belgium

USSERA Enforcement Bill Introduced

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VA Aid and Attendance Compensation

Aid and Attendance is a little-known monthly pension benefit administered through the Department of Veteran Affairs. [More](#)

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Vision Equity Act Passes House Vote

Legislation to increase compensation for certain visually impaired disabled veterans. [More](#)

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A new film exploring service and sacrifice in the military will get a special screening in Washington, DC, [More](#)

4 Ways to Fund Your Education in 2008
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The American Legion Announces Legacy Run
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The American Legion distributed \$500K grants to disabled veterans this holiday season. [More](#)

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Subcommittee Examines Waiting Times
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Blue Angels 2008 Show Schedule

Blue Angels Schedule now available. More

Youth Leadership Conference in Atlanta

The Army Reserve Child and Youth Services' Youth, Leadership, Education and Development Conference will be held Feb. 13-17, 2008.

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Army All-American Bowl

America's top high-school football players will battle it out in this year's Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio. More

New Museum Opens in Belgium

The Baugnez 44 Historical Center was recently dedicated near the city of Malmedy in eastern Belgium. More

USSERA Enforcement Bill Introduced

New legislation to strengthen the employment and reemployment rights of our returning servicemen and women has been introduced in the Senate. More

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1. Final VA Funding Passed: **Congress passed an historic funding bill that gives VA the largest increase in its history and fully meets the needs laid out by the VFW and the Independent Budget. The bill provides a total of \$43.1 billion in discretionary funding for VA, which is \$6.6 billion above the 2007 funding amount, and nearly \$4 billion above the president's budget request. The funding includes:**

- **\$37.2 billion for the Veterans Health Administration**
- **\$3.5 billion more than last year for medical services, which includes \$2.9 billion for mental healthcare, \$130 million for homeless veteran programs, and money to treat more than 260,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.**
- **\$1.1 billion for hospital construction and \$4.1 billion for medical facilities, which includes a \$530 million increase for maintenance and minor repairs.**
- **Funding to hire an additional 1,800 disability claims raters to help reduce the intolerable backlog of claims.**
- **\$2 billion, a \$752 million increase, to help VA Information Technology improve the medical records system to better interface with DOD systems as we work towards a seamless transition.**

The bill now moves to the president's desk, where it is expected to be signed. For VA to receive the full amount in the bill, however, the president would have declare \$3.7 billion of it as "emergency" funding by Jan. 18. VA does not receive this additional funding - which is the amount above what he had requested in his budget blueprint - until he declares the emergency. We would hope that the president quickly signs the bill into law and release these necessary funds. VA clearly needs the funding. The VFW thanks the congressional leadership and Congress for their bipartisan efforts to ensure this nation properly cares for her veterans.

- **Concurrent Receipt for disabled retirees with 20 years and deemed unemployable by VA. Retroactive payments to January 2005 would begin October 2008.**
 - **Eligibility of Combat-Related Special Compensation to all military disabled (Chapter 61) retirees with less than 20 years of service.**
 - **A national combat veteran reintegration program to provide families information, services, referrals, and proactive outreach throughout the entire deployment process.**
 - **A special payment of \$50 per month to survivors of members entitled to retired pay (or of Guard/Reserve retirees who died before age 60) whose SBP annuities are reduced by VA survivor benefits, effective Oct. 1, 2008. That amount will increase by \$10 each year for 5 years**
- Task Force Wants TRICARE Fees Increased: **The congressionally-chartered Task Force on the Future of Military Healthcare released its final report yesterday in the Pentagon, and among its many recommendations is one that would phase-in military TRICARE enrollment fee and deductible increases for retirees under 65. The rationale given for the recommendation was that usage fees have not risen in 10 years, whereas DOD healthcare costs have risen substantially, from \$19 billion in 2001 to \$39 billion this year. The recommended increases would be based on the retiree's retirement pay and phased in over the next four years. The Task Force said the increases, which would be indexed, would help stabilize the healthcare system for current and future users.**

Congress has purged TRICARE increase language from the past two defense budgets, but if somehow this latest proposal should go through, those in the highest retiree income bracket (\$40,000 or more a year in retirement pay) could see annual TRICARE Prime enrollment fees rise by approximately \$300 annually for four consecutive years, while those in the lowest bracket (\$19,999 or less) would experience \$100 annual increases. TRICARE for Life participants and those Medicare-eligible would also be subjected to a \$10 monthly enrollment fee. Similar increases were recommended for generic and brand name prescription copayments, as well.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coalition, Legion Award 1,000 Grants

Disabled Iraq, Afghanistan vets receive holiday cash

INDIANAPOLIS (Dec. 21, 2007) - The American Legion has distributed or processed 1,000 grants to disabled veterans this holiday season thanks to a \$500,000 donation from the The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes.

"The grants are gone, but the need to care for those who have borne the cost of battle remains," said National Commander Marty Conatser. "I am grateful to the Coalition for this generous gift. These vets certainly deserve it."

Any veteran who incurred a 30-percent or more disability while serving in the theater of operations during Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom was eligible for a \$500 grant. The American Legion assumed all distribution and administrative costs so the entire Coalition donation was awarded to the veterans.

"These grants were just a small token of appreciation for the sacrifices made by so many of America's men and women in uniform," said Thomas J. Palma, general manager of the Coalition. "The American Legion is a well-respected organization with a presence in communities across America. Legion service officers did a great job in finding deserving veterans and processing the grants."

It was not the first time that the two organizations have teamed up to award grants to disabled veterans. The American Legion distributed checks for the Coalition in 2005.

"The program was so successful two years ago that The American Legion's National Executive Committee unanimously passed a resolution at our last convention authorizing our assistance in this great endeavor," Conatser said. The awards were appreciated by many of the recipients. "I recently received a grant from the Legion. You have no idea what this has meant to me. It has been a great aid to my family and it just puts special warmth in me to know that there are good people out there that appreciate the sacrifice and work young and old people have given to preserve what is good about our home," said one recipient from Mt. Laurel, N.J. "I was not expecting this and it is with a joyful heart that I give you all my sincerest thanks, you made my family's Christmas. May God bless all of you."

The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, www.saluteheroes.org <Error! Bookmark not defined.>, is a nonprofit organization that was created to provide a way for individuals, corporations and others to help severely wounded and

disabled Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans and their families rebuild their lives.

The American Legion, www.legion.org, was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and patriotic youth programs. The Legion's 2.7 million wartime veterans work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

-30-

CONTACT: Joe March or John Raughter at (317) 630-1253; Cellular: (317) 748-1926 or (317) 441-8847.

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Congress finally approves authorization bill

A \$696.4 billion defense policy bill cleared its final congressional hurdle and is on its way to the White House for President Bush's signature.

The bill, passed on a 90-3 vote, includes a 3.5 percent military pay raise, a Wounded Warrior package aimed at helping injured combat veterans and their families, makes significant increases in the size of the Army and Marine Corps and includes almost \$100 billion in weapons funding.

"The pay increase won't make them rich, but they didn't join to get rich," said Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada, the Senate majority leader, referring to service members. "It will help them pay bills."

The bill includes authorization to add 13,000 active-duty soldiers and 9,000 Marines to the force, and orders the services to stop converting military medical jobs into civilian positions.

Also in the bill is a one-year freeze on any fee increases for people using the military's Tricare health insurance program.

There are two major benefits improvements for disabled retirees eligible for both military retired pay and veteran's disability compensation. First, veterans with disability ratings of less than 100 percent who nevertheless are considered fully disabled because they are determined to be unemployable will get full concurrent receipt of their retired pay and disability compensation — although not right away. Second, troops who are medically retired with less than 20 years of service with combat-related injuries will be eligible for Combat Related Special Compensation.

Reid, one of the chief sponsors of the two concurrent receipt provisions, said the bill makes great progress toward keeping promises made in 1999 when lawmakers began to eliminate a policy set in the 19th century that required a dollar-for-dollar offset in retired pay for those also receiving disability compensation for the same period of service.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Calif., the Senate Armed Services Committee chairman who helped negotiate details, said the peacetime defense bill is a critically important piece of legislation for lawmakers to pass by

the end of the year because troops would not get the Jan. 1 increase in pay and benefits if it doesn't. To pass the bill, the Senate interrupted debate on other measures.

The all-ranks pay increase should first appear in mid-January paychecks as long as President Bush signs the measure by about Dec. 31, because the Defense Finance and Accounting Service generally needs about 10 days to make major changes in the military payroll. There is another reason why it is important the bill be signed by Dec. 31: authority for two dozen recruiting and retention programs — including enlistment and re-enlistment bonuses for active and reserve forces — expires on Jan. 1 unless extended. The bill includes a one-year extension.

Congress and the Bush administration had strong disagreements about details of the bill, and veto threats even hung over the measure, but all of the major problems appear to be resolved, according to House and Senate aides. The final hurdle was overcome when the Senate agreed to give up on plans to attach an expansion of federal hate-crimes legislation to the defense bill.

Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., the House Armed Services Committee chairman who headed the negotiating conference where the compromise bill was written, called the measure "the best bill in decades that this Congress has put forward."

"It is good for the troops, good for our families, it will help improve readiness of our armed forces and it will bring new significant oversight to the Department of Defense in areas where oversight was sorely needed," Skelton said Dec. 12 as the House passed the bill by a 370-49 vote.

FYI
Tom Ressler
Program Supervisor
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From: **U.S. Senator Richard Burr - Press Office** [mailto:Press_Releases@BURR.SENATE.GOV]
Sent: **Tuesday, December 18, 2007 11:12 AM**
To: **VETAFF-WEBSITE-LIST@VETAFF.ENEWS.SENATE.GOV**
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U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Richard Burr

Ranking Member

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<http://burr.senate.gov>

Burr Applauds Passage Of Veterans Benefits Legislation *Act Enhances Benefits Afforded To Blind Veterans*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, December 18, 2007

CONTACT: Chris Walker
Mark Williams
Phone: (202) 224-3154

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) today applauded Senate passage of the Blinded Veterans Paired Organ Act of 2007 (H.R.797) which makes it easier for veterans who are legally blind to qualify for additional disability compensation payments. It also provides the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with more authority to issue headstones and grave markers, extends the VA's work study program for veterans, and provides states with federal assistance in maintaining their veterans' cemeteries. The legislation passed the Senate by unanimous consent Monday night. The measure passed the House of Representatives in March and will now go to the President for his signature.

“I applaud the Senate for passing this important piece of veterans’ legislation.” Burr said. “Changing VA’s disability policy will greatly benefit veterans blinded during their military service. I am also pleased state veterans’ cemeteries will receive greater federal assistance. This legislation will help honor our veterans by ensuring their final resting places are properly maintained.”

H.R. 797 changes the VA’s vision standard to qualify for disability benefits, which currently requires visual acuity of 5/200 or less. The bill modifies this

standard to 20/200 or less, which conforms to the benchmark of the American Medical Association, the Social Security Administration, and all 50 states. The measure also enhances the VA's authority to reimburse state veterans' cemeteries and provide government headstones and markers to veterans interred in private cemeteries. Under the legislation, veterans buried in a private cemetery may receive a government headstone or medallion or other appropriate marker to indicate their military service. The bill provides for the maintenance of state veterans' cemeteries by authorizing \$5 million to cover their expenses and removing some state reimbursement requirements.

#

Veteran House Legislation

29 December 07

Of the 4930 House bills introduced in the 110th Congress to date, following are those of interest to the non-active duty veteran community. By clicking on the bill number you can access the actual legislative language of the bill and see if your representative has signed on as a cosponsor. Support of these bills by other legislators is critical if they are ever going to move through the legislative process for a floor vote to become law. A good indication on that likelihood is the number of cosponsors who have signed onto the bill. A cosponsor is a member of Congress who has joined one or more members in his/her chamber (i.e. House or Senate) to sponsor a bill or amendment. The member who introduces the bill is considered the sponsor. Members subsequently signing on are called cosponsors. Any number of members may cosponsor a bill in the House or Senate. At <http://thomas.loc.gov> you can also review a copy of each bill, determine its current status, the committee it has been assigned to, and if your legislator is a sponsor or cosponsor of it. To determine what bills, amendments your representative has sponsored, cosponsored, or dropped sponsorship on refer to <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d110/sponlst.html>. The key to increasing cosponsorship is letting our representatives know of veterans feelings on issues. At the end of some listed bills is a web link that can be used to do that. Otherwise, you can locate on <http://thomas.loc.gov> who your representative is and his/her phone number, mailing address, or email/website to communicate with a message or letter of your own making:

House Bills

H.R.0023: Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 46, United States Code, to provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States merchant marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (244).** Companion bill S.0961. Status: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.0025: Fair Tax Act of 2007. A bill to promote freedom, fairness, and economic opportunity by repealing the income tax and other taxes, abolishing the Internal Revenue Service, and enacting a national sales tax to be administered primarily by the States. Sponsor: Rep Linder, John [GA-7] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (68).** Companion Bill is S.0025. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R.0067: Veterans Outreach Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep McIntyre, Mike [NC-7] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (32).** Status: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.0081: Montgomery GI Bill Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide that members of the Armed Forces and Selected Reserve may transfer certain educational assistance benefits to dependents, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Bartlett, Roscoe G. [MD-6] (introduced 1/4/07) **Cosponsors (3).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.0089: Combat-Related Special Compensation Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to extend eligibility for combat-related special compensation (CRSC) paid to certain uniformed services retirees who are retired under chapter 61 of such title with fewer than 20 years of creditable service. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (43).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. Companion bill S.986. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9240191>.

H.R.0092: Veterans Timely Access to Health Care Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish standards of access (i.e. 30 days) to care for veterans seeking health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, would allow referral to civilian care in cases where the standard is not met, would require the VA to annually report its performance in meeting those access standards, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Brown-Waite, Ginny [FL-5] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (11).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9240456>.

H.R.0109: Disabled Veteran Small Business Eligibility Expansion Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to make service-disabled veterans eligible under the 8(a) business development program. Sponsor: Rep Davis, Jo Ann [VA-1] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Small Business.

H.R.0112: G.I. Advanced Education in Science and Technology Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the payment of stipends to veterans who pursue doctoral degrees in science or technology. Sponsor: Rep Davis, Jo Ann [VA-1] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.0136: Identity Theft Notification Act of 2007. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to provide that individuals and appropriate authorities are notified by the Commissioner of Social Security of evidence of misuse of the Social Security account numbers of such individuals. Sponsor: Rep Gallegly, Elton [CA-24] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (11).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Social Security.

H.R.0140: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to require the amounts reimbursed to institutional providers of health care services under the TRICARE program to be the same as amounts reimbursed under Medicare, and to require the Secretary of Defense to contract for health care services with at least one teaching hospital in urban areas. Sponsor: Rep Green, Gene [TX-29] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors(13).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9329026&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9329026&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.0156: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the payment of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) to the survivors of former prisoners of war (POWs) who died on or before 30 SEP 99, under the same eligibility conditions as apply to payment of DIC to the survivors of former prisoners of war who die after that date. Sponsor: Rep Holden, Tim [PA-17] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (31).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9240856>

H.R.0191: Senior Citizens Tax Elimination Act. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the inclusion in gross income of Social Security benefits. Sponsor: Rep Paul, Ron [TX-14] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (11).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R.0207: Depleted Uranium Screening and Testing Act. A bill to provide for identification of members of the Armed Forces exposed during military service to depleted uranium, to provide for health testing of such members, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Serrano, Jose E. [NY-16] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (15).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.0243: Combat Military Medically Retired Veteran's Fairness Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the payment of Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) to members of the Armed Forces retired for disability with less than 20 years of active military service who

were awarded the Purple Heart. Sponsor: Rep Weller, Jerry [IL-11] (introduced 1/5/07). **Cosponsors (12)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.0303: Retired Pay Restoration Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and to eliminate the phase-in period under current law with respect to such concurrent receipt. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 1/5/07). **Cosponsors (156)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9240026>

H.R.0315: Healthy Vets Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts with community health care providers to improve access to health care for veterans in highly rural areas, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Pearce, Stevan [NM-2] (introduced 1/5/07). **Cosponsors (22)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9328981&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9328981&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.0327: Veterans Suicide Prevention Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement a comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans. Sponsor: Rep Boswell, Leonard L. [IA-3] (introduced 1/9/07).

Cosponsors (152). Status: Became Public Law No: 110-110

H.R.0333: Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50% to receive concurrent payment of both retired pay and veterans' disability compensation, to eliminate the phase-in period for concurrent receipt, to extend eligibility for concurrent receipt and combat-related special compensation to chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Marshall, Jim [GA-8] (introduced 1/9/07). **Cosponsors (60)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/bills/?bill=9548021>

H.R.0339: Veterans Outpatient Care Access Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve access to medical services for veterans seeking treatment at Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinics with exceptionally long waiting periods. Sponsor: Rep Duncan, John J., Jr. [TN-2] (introduced 1/9/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.0343: Military Retiree Health Care Relief Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a refundable credit to military retirees for premiums paid for coverage under Medicare Part B. Sponsor: Rep Emerson, Jo Ann [MO-8] (introduced 1/9/07). **Cosponsors (8)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9329391&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9329391&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.0402: Veterans' Disability Compensation Automatic COLA Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. Sponsor: Rep Knollenberg, Joe [MI-09] (introduced 1/11/07). **Cosponsors (30)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9330146&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9330146&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id]).

H.R.0447: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide that World War II merchant mariners who were awarded the Mariners Medal shall be provided eligibility for DVA health care on the same basis as veterans who have been awarded the Purple Heart. Sponsor: Rep Fortenberry, Jeff [NE-1] (introduced 1/12/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.0463: **Honor Our Commitment to Veterans Act**. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to terminate the administrative freeze on the enrollment into the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs of veterans in the lowest priority category for enrollment (referred to as "Priority 8"). Sponsor: Rep Rothman, Steven R. [NJ-09] (introduced 1/12/07). **Cosponsors (52)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.0538: **South Texas Veterans Access to Care Act of 2007**. To provide for the health care needs of veterans in far South Texas. Sponsor: Rep Ortiz, Solomon P. [TX-27] (introduced 1/17/07).

Cosponsors (14). Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.0542: A bill to require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide mental health services in languages other than English, as needed, for veterans with limited English proficiency, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Solis, Hilda L. [CA-32] (introduced 1/17/07). **Cosponsors (26)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.0551: **Home Ownership for America's Veterans Act of 2007**. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with respect to the eligibility of veterans for mortgage bond financing, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Davis, Susan A. [CA-53] (introduced 1/18/07). **Cosponsors (68)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R.0579: **Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act**. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to prohibit certain increases in fees (i.e. Tricare) for military health care. Sponsor: Rep Edwards, Chet [TX-17] (introduced 1/19/07). **Cosponsors (183)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9284961&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9284961&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id]) or

<http://capwiz.com/trea/issues/alert/?alertid=9289751&queueid=1050771381>

H.R.0585: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand the number of individuals qualifying for retroactive benefits from traumatic injury protection coverage under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance. Sponsor: Rep Herseth, Stephanie [SD] (introduced 1/19/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.0612: **Returning Servicemember VA Healthcare Insurance Act of 2007**. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the period of eligibility for health care for combat service in the Persian Gulf War or future hostilities from two years to five years after discharge or release. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 1/22/07). **Cosponsors (20)**. Status: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.0634: **American Veterans Disabled for Life Commemorative Coin Act**. A bill to authorize the secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative silver dollars that will be sold with a surcharge that will help the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Foundation raise the money needed to construct the Disabled Veterans Memorial. Sponsor: Rep Moore, Dennis [KS-3] (introduced 1/23/07). **Cosponsors 298**. Passed/agreed to in House: On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by the Yeas and Nays: (2/3 required): 416 – 0. Status: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to <http://capwiz.com/military/issues/alert/?alertid=9802696>

H.R.0649: Blind Veterans Fairness Act. A bill to amend title XVI of the Social Security Act to provide that annuities paid by States to blind veterans shall be disregarded in determining supplemental security income (SSI) benefits. Sponsor: Rep Reynolds, Thomas M. [NY-26] (introduced 1/24/07). **Cosponsors (35).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R.0650: A bill to provide for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a pilot program to determine the effectiveness of contracting for the use of private memory care facilities for veterans with Alzheimer's Disease. Sponsor: Rep Reynolds, Thomas M. [NY-26] (introduced 1/24/07). **Cosponsors (13).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.0652: A bill to make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at a discount to certain veterans. Sponsor: Rep Reynolds, Thomas M. [NY-26] (introduced 1/24/07). **Cosponsors (34).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands.

H.R.0653: Combat Veteran Affidavit Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to allow the sworn affidavit of a veteran who served in combat during the Korean War or an earlier conflict to be accepted as proof of service-connection of a disease or injury alleged to have been incurred or aggravated by such service. Sponsor: Rep Reynolds, Thomas M. [NY-26] (introduced 1/24/07).

Cosponsors (11). Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.0657: Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for forgiveness of certain overpayments of retired pay paid to deceased retired members of the Armed Forces following their death. Sponsor: Rep Jones, Walter B., Jr. [NC-3] (introduced 1/24/07).

Cosponsors (38). Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9322811&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9322811&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id]).

H.R.674: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to repeal the provision of law requiring termination of the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans as of December 31, 2009. Sponsor: Rep Gutierrez, Luis V. [IL-4] (introduced 1/24/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.675: Disabled Veterans Adaptive Housing Improvement Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase the amount of assistance available to disabled veterans for specially adapted housing and to provide for annual increases in such amount. Sponsor: Rep Herseth, Stephanie [SD] (introduced 1/24/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.0690: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to reduce the minimum age for receipt of military retired pay for non-regular service from 60 to 55. Sponsor: Rep Saxton, Jim [NJ-3] (introduced 1/24/07). **Cosponsors (123).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.0704: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to reduce from age 57 to age 55 the age after which the remarriage of the surviving spouse of a deceased veteran shall not result in termination of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) otherwise payable to that surviving spouse.

Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 1/29/07). **Cosponsors (6).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.0737: Forgotten Veteran's Retirement Compensation Act. A bill to correct an inequity in eligibility for military retired pay based on nonregular service in the case of certain members of the reserve components completing their reserve service before 1966. Sponsor: Rep Scott, Robert C. [VA-3] (introduced 1/30/07). **Cosponsors (8).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.0760: Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 1/31/07). **Cosponsors (108).** Companion bill S.0057. Status: Ordered to be Reported (Amended) by Voice Vote.

H.R.0784: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to change the effective date for paid-up coverage under the military Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). Sponsor: Rep Saxton, Jim [NJ-3] (introduced 1/31/07). **Cosponsors (117).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9409496&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9409496&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.0797: Veteran Vision Equity Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve compensation benefits for veterans in certain cases of impairment of vision involving both eyes, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Baldwin, Tammy [WI-2] (introduced 2/5/07). **Cosponsors 64.** Status: 12/19/2007 Presented to President

H.R.0959: Forgotten Military Widows Annuity Act of 2007. A bill to expand a Department of Defense survivor annuity program (SBP) that covers unremarried surviving spouses of certain members of the uniformed services who died before October 1, 1978, to include any otherwise eligible surviving spouse who remarries after age 55 or whose remarriage before age 55 is terminated. Sponsor: Rep Saxton, Jim [NJ-3] (introduced 2/8/07). **Cosponsors (none).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.0991: A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow individuals eligible for veterans health benefits to contribute to health savings accounts. Sponsor: Rep Campbell, John [CA-48] (introduced 2/12/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R.1041: Veterans Health Care Full Funding Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide an enhanced funding process to ensure an adequate level of funding for veterans health care programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Smith, Christopher H. [NJ-4] (introduced 2/14/07). **Cosponsors (6).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.1086: Strengthening America's Military Families Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income the earned income of a spouse of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States serving in a combat zone. Sponsor: Rep Garrett, Scott [NJ-5] (introduced 2/15/07). **Cosponsors (6).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R.1110: A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow Federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums. Sponsor: Rep Davis, Tom [VA-11] (introduced 2/16/07). **Cosponsors (298).** Companion bill to S.773. Status: Ordered to be Reported by Unanimous Consent. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/bills/?bill=9408296>

H.R.1115: A bill to amend section 1477 of title 10, United States Code, to provide additional options regarding the designation of the person to receive the death gratuity paid with respect to a member of the Armed Forces who dies without a surviving spouse, but who is survived by a minor child. Sponsor: Rep Latham, Tom [IA-4] (introduced 2/16/07). **Cosponsors (30).** Companion Bill is S.659. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9423396&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9423396&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.1197: Prisoner of War Benefits Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide improved benefits for veterans who are former prisoners of war. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 2/27/07). **Cosponsors (5).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.1211: Resuming Education After Defense Service Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide entitlement to educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill for members of the Selected Reserve who aggregate more than two years of active duty service in any five year period, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Matheson, Jim [UT-2] (introduced 2/27/07). **Cosponsors (69).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1214: Veterans' Survivors Education Enhancement Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand and enhance educational assistance for survivors and dependents of veterans. Sponsor: Rep Ramstad, Jim [MN-3] (introduced 2/27/07). **Cosponsors (3).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

H.R.1222: Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act. A bill to restore health care coverage to retired members of the uniformed services, and for other purposes. This measure would fulfill the promises made to young recruits that quality health care would be available to them when they retired after a career in uniformed service to our country. It would also allow military retirees to opt out of the Tricare military health system and enroll in the Federal Employees Health Benefit (FEHB) plan if Tricare does not provide them adequate health care. Sponsor: Rep Van Hollen, Chris [MD-8] (introduced 2/28/07). **Cosponsors (111).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1223: Keeping Faith with the Greatest Generation Military Retirees Act. A bill to amend part B of title XVIII of the Social Security Act to waive Medicare part B premiums for certain military retirees. Sponsor: Rep Van Hollen, Chris [MD-8] (introduced 2/28/07). **Cosponsors (97).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.1226: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for the basic educational assistance program of the DVA. Sponsor: Rep Johnson, Timothy V. [IL-15] (introduced 2/28/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1265: Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business Equity Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to authorize the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to award contracts to small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans under the section 8(a) program. Sponsor: Rep Buyer, Steve [IN-4] (introduced 3/1/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Small Business.

H.R.1268: Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act. A bill to ensure dignity in care for members of the Armed Forces recovering from injuries. Sponsor: Rep Mitchell, Harry E. [AZ-5] (introduced 3/1/07). **Cosponsors (36).** Companion Bill is S.713. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1272: Veterans' Pension Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the pension program of the DVA. Sponsor: Rep Berkley, Shelley [NV-1] (introduced 3/1/07). **Cosponsors (8).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.1273: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to restore plot allowance eligibility for veterans of any war and to restore the headstone or marker allowance for eligible persons. Sponsor: Rep Berkley, Shelley [NV-1] (introduced 3/1/07). **Cosponsors (3).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.1284: Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2007. A bill to increase, effective as of December 1, 2007, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans. Sponsor: Rep Hall, John J. [NY-19] (introduced 3/1/07). **Cosponsors (14).** Related bill S.423. Status: Became Public Law No: 110-111.

H.R.1315: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide specially adaptive housing assistance to certain disabled members of the Armed Forces residing temporarily in housing owned by a family member. Sponsor: Rep Herseth, Stephanie [SD] (introduced 3/5/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held. 8/3/2007 Read twice and referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.1318: Veterans' Benefits Protection Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to repeal the authority for agent or attorney representation in veterans benefits cases before the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Lewis, Ron [KY-2] (introduced 3/5/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.1330: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to extend the time limit for the use of education assistance by members of the Selected Reserve and members of the reserve component supporting contingency operations and certain other operations. Sponsor: Rep Carney, Christopher P. [PA-10] (introduced 3/6/07). **Cosponsors (42).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1354: Veterans Health and Benefits Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve benefits and services for members of the Armed Forces, veterans of the Global War on Terrorism, and other veterans, to require reports on the effects of the Global War on Terrorism, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Moran, James P. [VA-8] (introduced 3/6/07).

Cosponsors (55). Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1418: Reauthorization of the Traumatic Brain Injury Act. A bill to provide for the expansion and improvement of traumatic brain injury programs. Sponsor: Rep Pascrell, Bill, Jr. [NJ-8] (introduced 3/8/07). **Cosponsors (37).** Companion bill to S.793. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.1426: Veterans' Access to Local Health Care Options and Resources Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide veterans enrolled in the health system of the DVA the option of receiving covered health services through facilities other than those of the Department. Sponsor: Rep Latham, Tom [IA-4] (introduced 3/9/07). **Cosponsors (12).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held. Companion bill to S.815. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9697361&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9697361&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.1428: National Guard and Reserve Retirement Modernization Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to reduce the eligibility age for receipt of non-regular military service retired pay for members of the Ready Reserve in active federal status or on active duty for significant periods. Sponsor: Rep Latham, Tom [IA-4] (introduced 3/9/07). **Cosponsors (33).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1435: Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Backlog Reduction Act of 2007. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a pilot program to reduce the backlog of claims for benefits pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Baca, Joe [CA-43] (introduced 3/9/07). **Cosponsors (16).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.1436: Retired Pay Restoration Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the DVA for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of

military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation. It would eliminate the phase-in period for retirees who are paid at the 100%-disabled rate due to individual unemployability (IU). It also would extend concurrent receipt (CRDP) to otherwise-qualified disabled retirees with disabilities rated less than 50%. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 3/9/07). **Cosponsors (8)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1444: A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make interim benefit payments under certain remanded claims, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Hall, John J. [NY-19] (introduced 3/9/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.1470: Chiropractic Care Available to All Veterans Act. A bill to amend the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 to require the provision of chiropractic care and services to veterans at all Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 3/12/07). **Cosponsors (16)**. Related bills H.R.1471 & H.R.1554. Status: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9814161&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9814161&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.1471: BACK Veterans Health Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to permit eligible veterans to receive direct access to chiropractic care. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 3/12/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.1477: Disabled Veterans Commissary and Exchange Store Benefits Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to extend military commissary and exchange store privileges to veterans with a compensable service-connected disability and to their dependents. Sponsor: Rep Fortenberry, Jeff [NE-1] (introduced 3/12/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1490: A bill to provide for a presumption of service-connectedness for certain claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Donnelly, Joe [IN-2] (by request) (introduced 3/13/07). **Cosponsors (19)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.1521: Universal Health Act of 2007: Repeal of the Late Enrollment Penalty in Medicare Part D. A bill to amend part D of title XVIII of the Social Security Act to remove the Medicare prescription drug benefit late enrollment penalty. Sponsor: Rep Kagen, Steve, M.D. [WI-8] (introduced 3/14/07). **Cosponsors (24)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.1527: Rural Veterans Access to Care Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to allow highly rural veterans enrolled in the health system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive covered health services through providers other than those of the Department, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Moran, Jerry [KS-1] (introduced 3/14/07). **Cosponsors (12)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.1536: Prescription Coverage Now Act of 2007. A bill to amend part D of title XVIII of the Social Security Act to assist low-income individuals in obtaining subsidized prescription drug coverage under the Medicare prescription drug program by expediting the application and qualification process and by revising the resource standards used to determine eligibility for such subsidies, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Doggett, Lloyd [TX-25] (introduced 3/15/07). **Cosponsors (170)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.1538: Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes. Sponsor:

Rep Skelton, Ike [MO-4] (introduced 3/15/07). **Cosponsors (28)**. Related bill S.1283. Status: Passed Senate with an amendment by Unanimous Consent. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9600206&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9600206&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.1552: Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act of 2007. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to authorize physical therapists to evaluate and treat Medicare beneficiaries without a requirement for a physician referral, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Pomeroy, Earl [ND] (introduced 3/15/07). **Cosponsors (121)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.1554: Chiropractic Health Parity for Military Beneficiaries Act. A bill to require the Secretary of Defense to develop and implement a plan to provide chiropractic health care services and benefits for certain new beneficiaries as part of the TRICARE program. Sponsor: Rep Rogers, Mike D. [AL-3] (introduced 3/15/07). **Cosponsors (9)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1570: Bataan Death March Compensation Act. A bill to provide compensation for certain World War II veterans who survived the Bataan Death March and were held as prisoners of war by the Japanese. Sponsor: Rep Mica, John L. [FL-7] (introduced 3/19/07). **Cosponsors (4)**.

H.R.1589: Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act . A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to repeal the offset from surviving spouse annuities under the military Survivor Benefit Plan for amounts paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as dependency and indemnity compensation, to repeal the optional annuity authority for the dependent children of a member when there is an eligible surviving spouse, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Brown, Henry E., Jr. [SC-1] (introduced 3/20/07).

Cosponsors (81). Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9550256&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9550256&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.1660: A bill to direct the VA Secretary to establish a national cemetery for veterans in the southern Colorado region. Sponsor: Rep Salazar, John T. [CO-3] (introduced 3/22/07). **Cosponsors (8)**. Status: Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.1710: A bill to modify the calculation of back pay for persons who were approved for promotion as members of the Navy and Marine Corps while interned as prisoners of war during World War II to take into account changes in the Consumer Price Index. Sponsor: Rep Hooley, Darlene [OR-5] (introduced 3/27/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.1732: A bill to provide alternative retired pay rates under title 10, United States Code, and alternative disability compensation rates under title 38, United States Code, for members of the Armed Forces with a combat-related disability, with such rates based on the average monthly salary for high school graduates in the U.S., and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Bartlett, Roscoe G. [MD-6] (introduced 3/28/07). **Cosponsors (30)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.1745: Uniting America's Military Families Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to waive inadmissibility based on a misrepresentation in the case of an immediate relative of an active duty or reserve member of the Armed Forces and to extend the V nonimmigrant visa program for spouses and children of such a member. Sponsor: Rep Ortiz, Solomon P. [TX-27] (introduced 3/28/07). **Cosponsors (19)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law.

H.R.1750: A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend from 90 days to one year the period after release of a member of the Armed Forces from active duty during which the member is protected from mortgage foreclosure under that Act. Sponsor: Rep Wynn, Albert Russell [MD-4]

(introduced 3/28/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Forwarded by Subcommittee to Full Committee (Amended) by Voice Vote.

H.R.1863: A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct at two-year pilot program to use a mobile processing unit to perform certain services of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sponsor: Rep Lamborn, Doug [CO-5] (introduced 4/17/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.1864: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for the automated processing of veterans disability compensation claims. Sponsor: Rep Lamborn, Doug [CO-5] (introduced 4/17/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.1900: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend eligibility for pension benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to veterans who received an expeditionary medal during a period of military service other than a period of war. Sponsor: Rep Rahall, Nick J., II [WV-3] (introduced 4/17/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.1901: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend eligibility for pension benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to veterans who served during certain periods of time in specified locations. Sponsor: Rep Rahall, Nick J., II [WV-3] (introduced 4/17/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.1912: Medicare Hearing Enhancement and Auditory Rehabilitation (HEAR) Act of 2007. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to cover hearing aids and auditory rehabilitation services under the Medicare Program. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 4/18/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.1925: A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a separate Veterans Integrated Service Network for the Gulf Coast region of the United States. Sponsor: Rep Miller, Jeff [FL-1] (introduced 4/18/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.1927: The Military Retiree Survivor Equity Act. A bill to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan by veterans dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Ortiz, Solomon P. [TX-27] (introduced 4/18/07). **Cosponsors (92)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. Companion Bill is S.0935. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to <http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/bills/?bill=9660951>

H.R.1944: Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to screen certain veterans for symptoms of traumatic brain injury, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Altmire, Jason [PA-4] (introduced 4/19/07). **Cosponsors (69)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.1953: Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act. A bill to require the establishment of a Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers to compute cost-of-living increases for Social Security benefits under title II of the Social Security Act. Sponsor: Rep Gonzalez, Charles A. [TX-20] (introduced 4/19/07). **Cosponsors (9)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities.

H.R.1960: A Home for the Brave Act. A bill to amend the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 to allow community reinvestment credit for investments and other financial support to enable veterans to purchase residential homes or to assist organizations with the establishment of housing opportunities and

assisted living facilities for veterans. Sponsor: Rep Lynch, Stephen F. [MA-9] (introduced 4/19/07).

Cosponsors (13). Status: Referred to the House Committee on Financial Services.

H.R.1969: Montgomery G.I. Bill Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to exempt from payment of individual contributions under the Montgomery GI Bill enlisted members of the Armed Forces in pay grade E-5 or below and to provide an opportunity for members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty to withdraw an election not to enroll in education benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill. Sponsor: Rep Terry, Lee [NE-2] (introduced 4/19/07). **Cosponsors (5).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

H.R.2005: Rural Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve health care for veterans who live in rural areas, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Salazar, John T. [CO-3] (introduced 4/23/07). **Cosponsors (48).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.2026: Disabled Veterans Insurance Act of 2007. A bill to amend section 1922A of title 38, United States Code, to increase the amount of supplemental insurance available for totally disabled veterans. Sponsor: Rep Jones, Walter B., Jr. [NC-3] (introduced 4/25/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Companion bill S.1315. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.2027: Military Pay Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to provide an additional 0.5 percent increase in the rates of military basic pay for members of the uniformed services above the pay increase proposed by the Department of Defense so as to ensure at least a minimum pay increase of 3.5 percent for members and to further narrow the "pay gap" that exists between the military and private sector pay scales. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 4/25/07). **Cosponsors (12).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2044: Cadet and Midshipman Disability Fairness Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to extend eligibility for disability retired pay and separation pay to former cadets and midshipmen with prior enlisted service who incurred physical disabilities after January 1, 2000. Sponsor: Rep Stupak, Bart [MI-1] (introduced 4/25/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2048: Traumatic Brain Injury Access to Options Act. A bill to facilitate the provision of care and services for members of the Armed Forces for traumatic brain injury, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Donnelly, Joe [IN-2] (introduced 4/26/07). **Cosponsors (8).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2059: A bill to amend title 32, United States Code, to provide members of the National Guard additional time to transition to civilian life when they return from active duty in support of contingency operations or homeland defense missions. Sponsor: Rep Hooley, Darlene [OR-5] (introduced 4/26/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2064: Compassionate Care for Servicewomen Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to require emergency contraception to be available at all military health care treatment facilities. Sponsor: Rep Michaud, Michael H. [ME-2] (introduced 4/26/07). **Cosponsors (65).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2179: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish traumatic brain injury centers. Sponsor: Rep Walz, Timothy J. [MN-1] (introduced 5/3/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.2189: Military Health Services Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to require pre-and post-deployment mental health screenings for members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep DeLauro, Rosa L. [CT-3] (introduced 5/7/07). **Cosponsors (41).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2190: Advisory Committee on Rural Veterans Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish the Advisory Committee on Rural Veterans. Sponsor: Rep Donnelly, Joe [IN-2] (introduced 5/7/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.2192: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish an Ombudsman within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Hodes, Paul W. [NH-2] (introduced 5/7/07). **Cosponsors (40).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.2195: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to expand the education loan repayment program for members of the Selected Reserve. Sponsor: Rep Murphy, Patrick J. [PA-8] (introduced 5/7/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2219: Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline Act of 2007. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to award a grant to a private, nonprofit entity to establish, publicize, and operate a national toll-free suicide prevention telephone hotline targeted to and staffed by veterans of the Armed Forces. Sponsor: Rep Moran, James P. [VA-8] (introduced 5/8/07). **Cosponsors (26).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.2226: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide readjustment counseling and related mental health services to veterans through the use of mobile centers. Sponsor: Rep Welch, Peter [VT] (introduced 5/8/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.2239: Early Access to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Benefits Act . A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for vocational rehabilitation benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Boozman, John [AR-3] (introduced 5/9/07). **Cosponsors (5).** Status: Received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.2247: Montgomery GI Bill for Life Act of 2007. A bill to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to repeal the 10-year limit on use of Montgomery GI Bill educational assistance benefits, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Larsen, Rick [WA-2] (introduced 5/9/07). **Cosponsors (12).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2257: A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the number of benefits claims representatives employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and to ensure that there are not fewer than two such claims representatives located at each center for the provision of readjustment counseling and related mental health services established under section 1712A of title 38, United States Code (commonly referred to as a "vet center"), to help reduce the backlog of claims pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Welch, Peter [VT] (introduced 5/9/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.2259: A bill to ensure that members of the National Guard and Reserves are able to fully participate in the benefits delivery at discharge program administered jointly by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide information and assistance on available benefits and other transition assistance to members of the Armed Forces who are separating from the Armed Forces. Sponsor: Rep Welch, Peter [VT] (introduced 5/9/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2267: A bill to expand retroactive eligibility of the Army Combat Action Badge to include members of the Army who participated in combat during which they personally engaged, or were personally engaged by, the enemy at any time on or after December 7, 1941. Sponsor: Rep Brown-Waite, Ginny [FL-5] (introduced 5/10/07). **Cosponsors (8)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2292: **Pay Veterans First Act**. A bill to prohibit the payment of bonuses to certain officers of the Department of Veterans Affairs unless fewer than 100,000 disability compensation claims are pending before the Department. Sponsor: Rep Hall, John J. [NY-19] (introduced 5/14/07). **Cosponsors (20)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

H.R.2319: **TRICARE Mail-Order Pharmacy Pilot Program Act**. A bill to establish a Mail-Order Pharmacy Pilot Program. Sponsor: Rep Bilirakis, Gus M. [FL-9] (introduced 5/15/07). **Cosponsors (2)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2330: **VETS Act of 2007**. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers a credit against income tax for hiring veterans. Sponsor: Rep McCotter, Thaddeus G. [MI-11] (introduced 5/15/07). **Cosponsors (13)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R.2346: A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a process for determining whether a geographic area is sufficiently served by the national cemeteries located in that geographic area. Sponsor: Rep Fossella, Vito [NY-13] (introduced 5/16/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.2355: **Reservists and Guardsmen Tax Relief Act of 2007**. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the authority for penalty-free withdrawals from retirement plans by military reservists or national guardsmen called to active duty for extended periods. Sponsor: Rep Weldon, Dave [FL-15] (introduced 5/16/2007). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.2378: **Services to Prevent Veterans Homelessness Act**. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a financial assistance program to facilitate the provision of supportive services for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Herseth Sandlin, Stephanie [SD] (introduced 5/17/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.2385: **21st Century GI Bill of Rights Act of 2007**. A bill to provide and enhance education, housing, and entrepreneur assistance for veterans who serve in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Murphy, Patrick J. [PA-8] (introduced 5/17/07). **Cosponsors (6)**. Companion bill S.1401. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2417: **Montgomery GI Bill Second Chance Act of 2007**. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, and title 10, United States Code, to provide for an opportunity for active duty personnel to withdraw an election not to participate in the program of educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill. Sponsor: Rep Visclosky, Peter J. [IN-1] (introduced 5/21/07). **Cosponsors (58)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2434: **Veterans Right to Know Act of 2007**. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide regular notice to individuals submitting claims for benefits administered by the Secretary on the status of such claims. Sponsor: Rep Drake, Thelma D. [VA-2] (introduced 5/22/07). **Cosponsors (5)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.2475: **Veteran Home Equity Conversation Mortgage Act of 2007**. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to guarantee home equity conversion

mortgages for elderly veteran homeowners. Sponsor: Rep Michaud, Michael H. [ME-2] (introduced 5/24/07). **Cosponsors (2)**. Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.2495: Disabled Veterans Commissary and Exchange Store Benefits Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to extend military commissary and exchange store privileges to veterans with a compensable service-connected disability and to their dependents. Sponsor: Rep Burton, Dan [IN-5] (introduced 5/24/2007). **Cosponsors (18)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9899926&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9899926&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.2514: Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for an assured adequate level of funding for veterans health care. Sponsor: Rep Hare, Phil [IL-17] (introduced 5/24/07). **Cosponsors (115)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.2540: Honoring Existing Retirement Obligations for Every Servicemember Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United State Code to provide for the treatment of period of service in uniformed services as continued employment for purposes of pension and retirement benefits for individuals who die during the period of service. Sponsor: Rep Pomeroy, Earl [ND] (introduced 5/24/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.2551: A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery in Sarpy County, Nebraska, to serve veterans in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. Sponsor: Rep Terry, Lee [NE-2] (introduced 5/24/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.2585: A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to modify Medicare physician reimbursement policies to ensure a future physician workforce, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Burgess, Michael C. [TX-26] (introduced 6/6/07). **Cosponsors (20)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.2612: Mental Health Care for Our Wounded Warriors Act. A bill to improve mental health care for wounded members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Davis, Susan A. [CA-53] (introduced 6/7/07). **Cosponsors (16)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9914821&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9914821&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.2623: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the collection of copayments for all hospice care furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Miller, Jeff [FL-1] (introduced 6/7/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. 7/27/2007 Placed on the Union Calendar, Calendar No. 169.

H.R.2642: Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, 2008. A bill to make appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Edwards, Chet [TX-17] (introduced 6/11/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Received in the Senate 6/18/07. Read twice. Resolving differences 9/6/2007 -- Senate actions. Status: Senate insists on its amendment, asks for a conference, appoints conferees Johnson; Inouye; Landrieu; Byrd; Murray; Reed; Nelson NE; Leahy; Hutchison; Craig; Brownback; Allard; McConnell; Bennett; Cochran. Note: FY2008 appropriations for military construction and veterans affairs were incorporated as Division B in the H.R. 3043 conference report but subsequently removed from the bill. For further action, see H.R. 2764, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008.

H.R.2689: A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program for the provision of readjustment and mental health services to veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and

Operation Enduring Freedom, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Rodriguez, Ciro D. [TX-23] (introduced 6/12/07). **Cosponsors (7)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.2696: Veterans' Dignified Burial Assistance Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase assistance for veterans interred in cemeteries other than national cemeteries, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Lamborn, Doug [CO-5] (introduced 6/13/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.2697: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for veterans' mortgage life insurance to include members of the Armed Forces receiving specially adapted housing assistance from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Lamborn, Doug [CO-5] (introduced 6/13/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.2699: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to repeal authority for adjustments to per diem payments to homeless veterans service centers for receipt of other sources of income, to extend authorities for certain programs to benefit homeless veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Murphy, Patrick J. [PA-8] (introduced 6/13/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.2702: Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a program of educational assistance for members of the Armed Forces who serve in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Scott, Robert C. [VA-3] (introduced 6/13/07). **Cosponsors (87)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

H.R.2721: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to develop, and the Secretary of Defense to distribute to members of the Armed Forces upon their discharge or release from active duty, information in a compact disk read-only memory format that lists and explains the health, education, and other benefits for which veterans are eligible under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Cardoza, Dennis A. [CA-18] (introduced 6/14/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2795: Reasonable Rates for Veterans Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to set the rate of reimbursement under the beneficiary travel program of the Department of Veterans Affairs at \$0.21 per mile. Sponsor: Rep Pearce, Stevan [NM-2] (introduced 6/20/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.2855: Wounded Heroes' Bill of Rights Act. A bill to provide for transitional emergency assistance to certain members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are severely injured while serving on active duty, to expand and improve programs for caregiver services for those members and veterans, to require improved screening and care for traumatic brain injury for returning servicemembers and veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Rodriguez, Ciro D. [TX-23] (introduced 6/25/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.2874: Veterans' Health Care Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the provision of health care to veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Michaud, Michael H. [ME-2] (introduced 6/27/07). **Cosponsors (23)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.2910: VETS Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide for reimbursement to members of the Armed Forces of tuition for programs of education delayed by military service, for deferment of students loans and reduced interest rates for members of the Armed Forces during periods of military service, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Davis, Susan A. [CA-53]

(introduced 6/28/07). **Cosponsors (76)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

H.R.2943: Benefit Rating Acceleration for Veteran Entitlements Act of 2007. A bill to amend titles II and XVI of the Social Security Act to provide for treatment of disability rated and certified as total by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as disability for purposes of such titles. Sponsor: Rep Sarbanes, John P. [MD-3] (introduced 6/28/07). **Cosponsors (103)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=10020981&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=10020981&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

H.R.2996: Military Retiree Dislocation Assistance Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to provide a dislocation allowance under section 407 of such title to retired members of the uniformed services, including members placed on the temporary disability retired list, moving from their last duty station to their designated home. Sponsor: Rep Drake, Thelma D. [VA-2] (introduced 7/11/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3008: Rural Veterans Services Outreach and Training Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve services for veterans residing in rural areas. Sponsor: Rep Wu, David [OR-1] (introduced 7/11/07). **Cosponsors (17)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.3040: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide additional educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill to veterans pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, or math. Sponsor: Rep Space, Zachary T. [OH-18] (introduced 7/12/07). **Cosponsors (10)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3046: Social Security Number Privacy and Identity Theft Prevention Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Social Security Act to enhance Social Security account number privacy protections, to prevent fraudulent misuse of the Social Security account number, and to otherwise enhance protection against identity theft, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep McNulty, Michael R. [NY-21] (introduced 7/16/07). **Cosponsors (53)**. Status: 9/24/2007 Placed on the Union Calendar, Calendar No. 210.

H.R.3047: Veterans Claims Processing Innovation Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the processing of claims for benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Lamborn, Doug [CO-5] (introduced 7/16/07). **Cosponsors (23)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.3070: Disabled Veterans' Caregiver Compensation Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize additional compensation to be paid to certain veterans in receipt of compensation for a service-connected disability rated totally disabling for whom a family member dependent on the veteran for support provides care. Sponsor: Rep Peterson, Collin C. [MN-7] (introduced 7/17/07). **Cosponsors (none)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.3099: National Guard and Reserve Higher Education Fairness Act. A bill to amend title 10, to permit members of the Selected Reserves and members of the reserve component to reenter their military service and receive chapter 1607 education benefits if that member has earned such benefit before originally separating from service. Sponsor: Rep Carney, Christopher P. [PA-10] (introduced 7/19/07). **Cosponsors (67)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3103: Veteran's Choice in Nursing Home Care Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide partial payment for nursing home care to eligible veterans at a non-Department of Veterans Affairs nursing home of the veteran's choice, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Drake, Thelma D. [VA-2] (introduced 7/19/07). **Cosponsors (4)**. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.3128: A bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to conduct a study on the feasibility of using military identification numbers instead of social security numbers to identify members of the Armed Forces. Sponsor: Rep Gohmert, Louie [TX-1] (introduced 7/23/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3191: Wounded Warrior Information Sharing Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the transfer of certain contact information for a member of the Armed Forces who is being medically separated or retired under chapter 61 of such title to the department or agency for veterans affairs of the State in which the member intends to reside. Sponsor: Rep Courtney, Joe [CT-2] (introduced 7/26/07). **Cosponsors (40).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3210: Wounded Warriors Expansion of Care Act of 2007. A bill to provide medical care and other benefits for members and former members of the Armed Forces with severe injuries or illnesses. Sponsor: Rep Donnelly, Joe [IN-2] (introduced 7/27/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3249: Veterans Burial Benefits Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase burial benefits for veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Berkley, Shelley [NV-1] (introduced 7/31/07). **Cosponsors (24).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.3286: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to reduce the period of time for which a veteran must be totally disabled before the veteran's survivors are eligible for the benefits provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for survivors of certain veterans rated totally disabled at time of death. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 8/1/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.3298: 21st Century Servicemembers Protection Act . A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to allow individuals called to military service to terminate or suspend certain service contracts entered into before the individual receives notice of a permanent change of station or deployment orders and to provide penalties for violations of interest rate limitations. Sponsor: Rep Murphy, Patrick J. [PA-8] (introduced 8/1/07). **Cosponsors (82).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

H.R.3329: Homes for Heroes Act of 2007. A bill to provide housing assistance for very low-income veterans. Sponsor: Rep Green, Al [TX-9] (introduced 8/2/07). **Cosponsors (32).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Financial Services.

H.R.3380: A bill to amend title 4, United States Code, to prescribe that members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform may render the military salute during hoisting, lowering, or passing of flag. Sponsor: Rep Boren, Dan [OK-2] (introduced 8/3/07). **Cosponsors (20).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties.

H.R.3393: Reservist Access to Justice Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve veterans' reemployment rights under chapter 43 of such title, to exempt claims brought under that chapter from arbitration under chapter 1 of title 9 of such Code, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Davis, Artur [AL-7] (introduced 8/3/07). **Cosponsors (13).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

H.R.3415: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the placement in a national cemetery of memorial markers for the purpose of commemorating servicemembers or other persons whose remains are interred in an American Battle Monuments Commission cemetery. Sponsor: Rep Langevin, James R. [RI-2] (introduced 8/3/07). **Cosponsors (4).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

H.R.3423: United States Cadet Nurse Corps Equity Act. A bill to provide that service of the members of the organization known as the United States Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II constituted active military service for purposes of laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Rep Lowey, Nita M. [NY-18] (introduced 8/3/07). **Cosponsors (8).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3429: Hire a Hero Act . A bill to authorize a competitive grant program to assist members of the National Guard and Reserve and former and current members of the Armed Forces in securing employment in the private sector, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Murphy, Patrick J. [PA-8] (introduced 8/3/07). **Cosponsors (27).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3449: Guard and Reserve Early Retirement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide eligibility for reduced non-regular service military retired pay before age 60, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Wilson, Joe [SC-2] (introduced 8/3/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3458: A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on the provision of traumatic brain injury care in rural areas. Sponsor: Rep Capito, Shelley Moore [WV-2] (introduced 8/4/07). **Cosponsors (3).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Health.

H.R.3471: Atomic Veterans Medal Act of 2007. A bill to provide for the award of a military service medal to members of the Armed Forces who were exposed to ionizing radiation as a result of participation in a test of atomic weapons. Sponsor: Rep Tiahrt, Todd [KS-4] (introduced 9/4/07). **Cosponsors (7).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3581: A bill to clarify the roles of the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs disability evaluation systems for retirement and compensation of members of the Armed Forces for disability, to require the development of a single physical exam that can be used to determine both fitness for duty and disability ratings, to standardize fitness testing among the Armed Forces, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Jones, Walter B., Jr. [NC-3] (introduced 9/19/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3620: Homecoming Enhancement Research and Oversight Act. A bill to provide for a comprehensive national research effort on the physical and mental health and other readjustment needs of the members of the Armed Forces and veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and their families. Sponsor: Rep Kilpatrick, Carolyn C. [MI-13] (introduced 9/20/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3645: Healthier Heroes Act. A bill to implement recommendations of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. Sponsor: Rep Space, Zachary T. [OH-18] (introduced 9/24/07). **Cosponsors (13).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.3786: Servicemembers Telecom Contract Relief Act. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to allow individuals called to military service to terminate telecommunications contracts entered into before the individual receives notice of a permanent change of station or deployment orders. Sponsor: Rep Lofgren, Zoe [CA-16] (introduced 10/9/07). **Cosponsors (8).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.3794: Recognition of Forgotten Atomic Veterans and their Surviving Spouses Act of 2007. A bill to improve the availability of benefits for veterans and the surviving spouses of veterans who were exposed while in military service to ionizing radiation, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 10/10/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary,

and in addition to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

H.R.3795: You Were There, You Get Care Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide that veterans of service in the 1991 Persian Gulf War and subsequent conflicts shall be considered to be radiation-exposed veterans for purposes of the service-connection of certain diseases and disabilities, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 10/10/07).

Cosponsors (None). Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans'

H.R.3819: Veterans Emergency Care Fairness Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reimburse veterans receiving emergency treatment in non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities for such treatment until such veterans are transferred to Department facilities, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Space, Zachary T. [OH-18] (introduced 10/10/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.3882: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to change the length of the obligated period of service on active duty required for receiving certain education benefits administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Walz, Timothy J. [MN-1] (introduced 10/17/07).

Cosponsors (129). Status: Ordered to be Reported (Amended) by Voice Vote.

H.R.3954: Providing Military Honors for our Nation's Heroes Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reimburse certain volunteers who provide funeral honors details at the funerals of veterans. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 10/24/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.3991: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to extend the time limit for the use of education benefits by members of the Selected Reserve and certain members of the reserve component, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Stupak, Bart [MI-1] (introduced 10/29/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Armed Services.

H.R.4007: Amerasian Paternity Recognition Act. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide citizenship for certain children of United States servicemen born overseas during the Vietnam and Korean Wars. Sponsor: Rep Lofgren, Zoe [CA-16] (introduced 10/30/07). **Cosponsors (5).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R.4052: Atomic Veterans Relief Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to revise the eligibility criteria for presumption of service-connection of certain diseases and disabilities for veterans exposed to ionizing radiation during military service, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Abercrombie, Neil [HI-1] (introduced 11/1/07). **Cosponsors (8).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4053: Mental Health Improvements Act of 2007. A bill to improve the treatment and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Berkley, Shelley [NV-1] (introduced 11/1/07). **Cosponsors (15).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4071: Disabled Veterans Right to Commissaries and Space Available Travel Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to support disabled veterans by extending military commissary and exchange store privileges to such veterans and their dependents and by authorizing space-available travel on military aircraft for such veterans and their dependents. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 11/5/07). **Cosponsors (3).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.4084: Veterans Quality of Life Study Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require a study on the Department of Veterans Affairs schedule for rating disabilities, to provide for the treatment of claims under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in the case of the death of a claimant, to require an annual report on the workload of the Court of Appeals for Veteran Claims, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Hall, John J. [NY-19] (introduced 11/6/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Subcommittee Hearings Held.

H.R.4107: Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand and improve health care services available to women veterans, especially those serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Herseht Sandlin, Stephanie [SD] (introduced 11/7/07). **Cosponsors (6).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.4116: A bill to provide for the issuance of a veterans health care stamp. Sponsor: Rep Burgess, Michael C. [TX-26] (introduced 11/8/07). **Cosponsors (13).** Status: Referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

H.R.4130: Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for certain servicemembers to become eligible for educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill. Sponsor: Rep Walberg, Timothy [MI-7] (introduced 11/9/07). **Cosponsors (20).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4141: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide a plot allowance for spouses and children of certain veterans who are buried in State cemeteries. Sponsor: Rep Garrett, Scott [NJ-5] (introduced 11/9/07). **Cosponsors (21).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4142: Improving Medication Access for Veterans Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to permit medicare-eligible veterans to receive an out-patient medication benefit, to provide that certain veterans who receive such benefit are not otherwise eligible for medical care and services from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Garrett, Scott [NJ-5] (introduced 11/9/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4148: National Guard and Reserve Active Duty Higher Education Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the eligibility of reserve component members supporting contingency operations for educational assistance based on cumulative days of active duty service. Sponsor: Rep Lampson, Nick [TX-22] (introduced 11/9/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

H.R.4204: Veterans Suicide Study Act. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on suicides among veterans. Sponsor: Rep Boswell, Leonard L. [IA-3] (introduced 11/15/07). **Cosponsors (46).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4219: Immediate Benefits for Wounded Warriors Act of 2007. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assign a temporary disability rating to certain members of the Armed Forces upon separation, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Donnelly, Joe [IN-2] (introduced 11/15/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4231: Rural Veterans Health Care Access Act of 2007. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide mental health services to certain veterans of Operation

Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Sponsor: Rep Kagen, Steve [WI-8] (introduced 11/15/07). **Cosponsors (32)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4247: STRONGR Act. A bill to improve certain compensation, health care, and education benefits for individuals who serve in a reserve component of the uniformed services, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Smith, Adam [WA-9] (introduced 11/15/07). **Cosponsors (15)**. Status: Referred to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, and Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

H.R.4253: Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007. A bill to improve and expand small business assistance programs for veterans of the armed forces and military reservists, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Altmire, Jason [PA-4] (introduced 12/4/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Latest Major Action: 12/7/07 Received in the Senate.

H.R.4274: Gold Star Parents Annuity Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the payment of a monthly stipend to the surviving parents (known as "Gold Star parents") of members of the Armed Forces who die during a period of war. Sponsor: Rep Walsh, James T. [NY-25] (introduced 12/4/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

H.R.4334: A bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to ensure that a member of the uniformed services who no longer satisfies the eligibility conditions for receipt of a bonus or similar benefit because of the death of the member or the retirement or separation of the member due to injury, illness, or other impairment will still receive the balance of the bonus or similar benefit and is not required to repay any portion of the bonus or similar benefit previously paid. Sponsor: Rep McHugh, John M. [NY-23] (introduced 12/6/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Armed Services.

H.R.4463: Veterans Health Care Quality Improvement Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the quality of care provided to veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, to encourage highly qualified doctors to serve in hard-to-fill positions in such medical facilities, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Costello, Jerry F. [IL-12] (introduced 12/12/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

H.R.4720: In Memory Medal for Forgotten Veterans Act. A bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to issue a medal to certain veterans who died after their service in the Vietnam War as a direct result of that service. Sponsor: Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] (introduced 12/17/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Armed Services.

H.R.4750: Tax Relief and Fulfilling Our Obligation to Patriotic Soldiers Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income any enlistment, accession, reenlistment, retention, or incentive bonus paid to a member of the Armed Forces and to amend title 37, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Defense to continue to pay to a member of the Armed Forces who is retired or separated from the Armed Forces due to a combat-related injury certain bonuses that the member was entitled to before the retirement or separation and would continue to be entitled to if the member was not retired or separated. Sponsor: Rep King, Peter T. [NY-3] (introduced 12/17/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

H.R.4781: A bill to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from authorizing honor guards to participate in funerals of veterans interred in national cemeteries unless the honor guards agree to offer

veterans' families the option of having the honor guard perform a 13-fold flag recitation, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Broun, Paul C. [GA-10] (introduced 12/18/07). **Cosponsors (37)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4915: To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand access to hospital care for veterans in urban areas, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep Pryce, Deborah [OH-15] (introduced 12/19/07). **Cosponsors (2)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R.4930: To amend title 10, United States Code, to ensure that members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who have served on active duty or performed active service since September 11, 2001, in support of a contingency operation or in other emergency situations receive credit for such service in determining eligibility for early receipt of non-regular service retired pay, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Rep Wilson, Joe [SC-2] (introduced 12/19/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Armed Services

[Source: <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/110search.html> 29 Dec 07 ++]

Veteran Senate Legislation

29 December 07

Of the 2524 Senate bills introduced in the 110th Congress to date, following are those of interest to the non-active duty veteran community. By clicking on the bill number you can access the actual legislative language of the bill and see if your representative has signed on as a cosponsor. Support of these bills by other legislators is critical if they are ever going to move through the legislative process for a floor vote to become law. A good indication on that likelihood is the number of cosponsors who have signed onto the bill. A cosponsor is a member of Congress who has joined one or more members in his/her chamber (i.e. House or Senate) to sponsor a bill or amendment. The member who introduces the bill is considered the sponsor. Members subsequently signing on are called cosponsors. Any number of members may cosponsor a bill in the House or Senate. At <http://thomas.loc.gov> you can also review a copy of each bill, determine its current status, the committee it has been assigned to, and if your legislator is a sponsor or cosponsor of it. To determine what bills, amendments your representative has sponsored, cosponsored, or dropped sponsorship on refer to <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d110/sponlst.html>. The key to increasing cosponsorship is letting our representatives know of veterans feelings on issues. At the end of some listed bills is a web link that can be used to do that. Otherwise, you can locate on <http://thomas.loc.gov> who your representative is and his/her phone number, mailing address, or email/website to communicate with a message or letter of your own making:

Senate Bills

S.0022: Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a program of educational assistance for members of the Armed Forces who serve in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Webb, Jim [VA] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (30).** Status: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Hearings held. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9242071>

S.0038: A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program for the provision of readjustment and mental health services to veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Domenici, Pete V. [NM] (introduced 5/23/07). **Cosponsors (12).** Companion Bill is H.R.0025. Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Hearings held.

S.0057: Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Sen Inouye, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (15).** Companion bill H.R.0760. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0066: A bill to require the Secretary of the Army to determine the validity of the claims of certain Filipinos that they performed military service on behalf of the United States during World War II. Sponsor: Sen Inouye, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0067: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit former members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces are entitled to travel on such aircraft. Sponsor:

Sen Inouye, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (8)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.0071: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to authorize certain disabled former prisoners of war (POWs) to use DoD commissary and exchange stores. Sponsor: Sen Inouye, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.0117: Veterans Health and Benefits Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve benefits and services for members of the Armed Forces, veterans of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), and other veterans, to require reports on the effects of the GWOT, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Obama, Barack [IL] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (15)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0161: Veterans' Disability Compensation Automatic COLA Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. Sponsor: Sen Thune, John [SD] (introduced 1/4/07). **Cosponsors (2)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9568626&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9568626&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

S.0207: Voluntary Support for Reservists and National Guard Members Act. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow taxpayers to designate part or all of any income tax refund to support reservists and National Guard members. Sponsor: Sen Coleman, Norm [MN] (introduced 1/9/07). **Cosponsors (2)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance.

S.0225: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand the number of individuals qualifying for retroactive benefits from traumatic injury protection coverage under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance. It would expand retroactive payments of traumatic injury insurance to servicemembers injured outside a combat area between 10 OCT 01 and 1 DEC 05. Sponsor: Sen Craig, Larry E. [ID] (introduced 1/9/07). **Cosponsors (3)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9242246>

S.0326: Disabled Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a special period of limitation when uniformed services retirement pay is reduced as result of award of disability compensation. Sponsor: Sen Lincoln, Blanche L. [AR] (introduced 1/17/07). **Cosponsors (29)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=9294921>

S.0383: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the period of eligibility for health care for combat service in the Persian Gulf War or future hostilities from two years to five years after discharge or release. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 1/24/07). **Cosponsors (4)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0415: Veterans' Memorials ... Protection Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Revised Statutes of the United States to prevent the use of the legal system in a manner that among other things will stop the award of taxpayer dollars in legal fees to groups filing lawsuits against veterans' memorials and public displays of religion. Sponsor: Sen Brownback, Sam [KS] (introduced 1/29/07). **Cosponsors (21)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S.0423: Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2007. A bill to increase, effective as of December 1, 2007, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for the survivors of certain disabled veterans. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 1/29/07). **Cosponsors (10).** 7/24/07 Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 283.

S.0439: Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the VA for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation. Sponsor: Sen Reid, Harry [NV] (introduced 1/31/07). **Cosponsors (29).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.0479: Veterans Suicide Prevention Act. A bill to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans. Sponsor: Sen Harkin, Tom [IA] (introduced 2/1/07). **Cosponsors (31).** Status: Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar 7/23/07 under General Orders. Calendar No. 279. For further action, see H.R.327, which became Public Law 110-110 on 11/5/2007.

S.0604: Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to limit increases in the certain costs of health care services under the health care programs of DoD, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Lautenberg, Frank R. [NJ] (introduced 2/15/07). **Cosponsors (20).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9388371&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9388371&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id]).

S.0617: Veterans Eagle Parks Pass Act. A bill to make the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available at a discount to certain veterans. Sponsor: Sen Smith, Gordon H. [OR] (introduced 2/15/07). **Cosponsors (13).** Status: Status: Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Senate Subcommittee on National Parks. Hearings held. With printed Hearing: S.Hrg. 110-158.

S.0643: Disabled Veterans Insurance Act of 2007. A bill to amend section 1922A of title 38, United States Code, to increase the amount of supplemental insurance available for totally disabled veterans. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 2/15/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0644: Total Force Montgomery GI Bill. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to recodify as part of that title certain educational assistance programs for members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces, to improve such programs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Lincoln, Blanche L. [AR] (introduced 2/15/07). **Cosponsors (18).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.0648: National Guard and Reserve Retirement Modernization Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to reduce the eligibility age for receipt of non-regular military service retired pay for members of the Ready Reserve in active federal status or on active duty for significant periods. Sponsor: Sen Chambliss, Saxby [GA] (introduced 2/15/07). **Cosponsors (16).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.0659: A bill to amend section 1477 of title 10, United States Code, to provide for the payment of the death gratuity with respect to members of the Armed Forces without a surviving spouse who are survived by a minor child. Sponsor: Sen Hagel, Chuck [NE] (introduced 2/16/07). **Cosponsors (6).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services. Companion Bill is H.R.1115. To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9423746&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9423746&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

S.0671: Filipino Veterans Family Reunification Act. A bill to exempt children of certain Filipino World War II veterans from the numerical limitations on immigrant visas. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 2/16/07). **Cosponsors (11).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S.0713: Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act. A bill to ensure dignity in care for members of the Armed Forces recovering from injuries. Sponsor: Sen Obama, Barack [IL] (introduced 2/28/07). **Cosponsors (34).** Companion Bill is H.R.1268. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9454946&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9454946&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

S.0723: Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act of 2007. A bill to provide certain enhancements to the Montgomery GI Bill Program for certain individuals who serve as members of the Armed Forces after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Hagel, Chuck [NE] (introduced 3/1/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.0773: A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow Federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and to allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums. Sponsor: Sen Warner, John [VA] (introduced 3/6/07). **Cosponsors (57).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance. Companion bill to H.R.1110. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to

<http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/alert/?alertid=9598891&type=CO>

S.0793: Reauthorization of the Traumatic Brain Injury Act. A bill to provide for the expansion and improvement of traumatic brain injury programs. Sponsor: Sen Hatch, Orrin G. [UT] (introduced 3/7/07). **Cosponsors (20).** Companion bill to H.R.1418. Status: 8/1/2007 Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 317.

S.0815: Veterans Health Care Empowerment Act of 2007. A bill to provide health care benefits to veterans with a service-connected disability at non-DVA medical facilities that receive payments under the Medicare program or the TRICARE program. Sponsor: Sen Craig, Larry E. [ID] (introduced 3/8/07). **Cosponsors (3).** Companion bill to H.R.1416. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0847: A bill to extend the period of time during which a veteran's multiple sclerosis is to be considered to have been incurred in, or aggravated by, military service during a period of war. Sponsor: Sen Murray, Patty [WA] (introduced 3/13/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0848: Prisoner of War Benefits Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide improved benefits for veterans who are former prisoners of war. Sponsor: Sen Murray, Patty [WA] (introduced 3/13/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0882: A bill to require a pilot program on the facilitation of the transition of members of the Armed Forces to receipt of veterans health care benefits upon completion of military service, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Menendez, Robert [NJ] (introduced 3/14/07). **Cosponsors (7).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0935: A bill to repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) by veterans' dependency and indemnity compensation, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Nelson, Bill [FL] (introduced 3/20/07). **Cosponsors (43).** Status: Read twice and referred to the

Committee on Armed Services. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9549971&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9549971&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

S.0961: Belated Thank You to the Merchant Mariners of World War II Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 46, United States Code, to provide benefits to certain individuals who served in the United States merchant marine (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service) during World War II, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Nelson, E. Benjamin [NE] (introduced 3/22/07).

Cosponsors (57). Companion bill H.R.0023. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.0986: Combat-Related Special Compensation Act of 2007. A bill to expand eligibility for Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) paid by the uniformed services in order to permit certain additional retired members who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the DVA for that disability and Combat-Related Special Compensation by reason of that disability. Sponsor: Sen Reid, Harry [NV] (introduced 3/26/07). **Cosponsors (4).** Companion bill H.R.0089. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9581151&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9581151&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

S.0994: Disabled Veterans Fairness Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to eliminate the deductible and change the method of determining the mileage reimbursement rate under the beneficiary travel program administered by the Secretary of Veteran Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Tester, Jon [MT] (introduced 3/27/07). **Cosponsors (9).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1005: Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to improve programs for veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Kerry, John F. [MA] (introduced 3/28/07). **Cosponsors (4).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

S.1065: Heroes at Home Act of 2007. A bill to improve the diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injury in members and former members of the Armed Forces, to review and expand telehealth and telemental health programs of the DoD and the DVA. Sponsor: Sen Clinton, Hillary Rodham [NY] (introduced 3/29/07). **Cosponsors (8).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1084: Homes for Heroes Act of 2007. A bill to provide housing assistance for very low-income veterans. Sponsor: Sen Obama, Barack [IL] (introduced 4/10/07). **Cosponsors (9).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

S.1096: Veterans Housing Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide certain housing benefits to disabled members of the Armed Forces, to expand certain benefits for disabled veterans with severe burns, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Cornyn, John [TX] (introduced 4/12/07). **Cosponsors (5).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1097: Cold War Medal Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the award of a military service medal to members of the Armed Forces who served honorably during the Cold War era. Sponsor: Sen Clinton, Hillary Rodham [NY] (introduced 4/12/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1146: Rural Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve health care for veterans who live in rural areas, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen

Salazar, Ken [CO] (introduced 4/18/07). **Cosponsors (26)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to <http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=10064941&queueid=1314882681>.

S.1147: Honor Our Commitment to Veterans Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to terminate the administrative freeze on the enrollment into the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs of veterans in the lowest priority category for enrollment (referred to as "Priority 8"). Sponsor: Sen Murray, Patty [WA] (introduced 4/18/07). **Cosponsors (4)**. Companion Bill H.R.0463. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1163: Blinded Veterans Paired Organ Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve compensation and specially adapted housing for veterans in certain cases of impairment of vision involving both eyes, and to provide for the use of the National Directory of New Hires for income verification purposes. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 4/19/2007). **Cosponsors (6)**. Status: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.

S.1196: Mental Health Care for Our Wounded Warriors Act. A bill to improve mental health care for wounded members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Lieberman, Joseph I. [CT] (introduced 4/24/07). **Cosponsors (6)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1205: A bill to require a pilot program on assisting veterans service organizations and other veterans groups in developing and promoting peer support programs that facilitate community reintegration of veterans returning from active duty, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Smith, Gordon H. [OR] (introduced 4/25/07). **Cosponsors (5)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1233: Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation Act of 2007. A bill to provide and enhance intervention, rehabilitative treatment, and services to veterans with traumatic brain injury, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 4/26/07). **Cosponsors (11)**. Status: 8/29/2007 Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 335.

S.1243: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to reduce the age for receipt of military retired pay for nonregular service from 60 years of age to 55 years of age. Sponsor: Sen Kerry, John F. [MA] (introduced 4/26/07). **Cosponsors (7)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1252: A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for uniformity in the awarding of disability ratings for wounds or injuries incurred by members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 4/30/07). **Cosponsors (2)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9769981&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9769981&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id])

S.1265: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for veterans' mortgage life insurance to include members of the Armed Forces receiving specially adapted housing assistance from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sponsor: Sen Craig, Larry E. [ID] (introduced 5/2/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1266: Veterans' Dignified Burial Assistance Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase assistance for veterans interred in cemeteries other than national cemeteries, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Craig, Larry E. [ID] (introduced 5/2/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1283: Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care, personnel actions, and quality of life issues for members of the Armed Forces who are receiving medical care in an outpatient status, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Pryor, Mark L. [AR] (introduced 5/3/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services. Companion Bill H.R.1538. Passed by Senate and referred to a Senate/House compromise committee.

S.1293: Veterans' Education and Vocational Benefits Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend titles 10 and 38, United States Code, to improve educational assistance for members and former members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Craig, Larry E. [ID] (introduced 5/3/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1314: Veterans Outreach Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Feingold, Russell D. [WI] (introduced 5/7/07). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1315: Disabled Veterans Insurance Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance life insurance benefits for disabled veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 5/7/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: 8/29/2007 Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 336.bill H.R.2026.

S.1326: Comprehensive Veterans Benefits Improvements Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve and enhance compensation and pension, health care, housing, burial, and other benefits for veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen. Bernard Sanders [I-VT] (introduced 5/8/07). **Cosponsors (none).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to [http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=10072701&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=10072701&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id]).

S.1349: Military and Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Act. A bill to ensure that the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs provide to members of the Armed Forces and veterans with traumatic brain injury the services that best meet their individual needs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Durbin, Richard [IL] (introduced 5/9/07). **Cosponsors (9).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1363: Bridging the Gap for Wounded Warriors Act. A bill to improve health care for severely injured members and former members of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Clinton, Hillary Rodham [NY] (introduced 5/10/07). **Cosponsors (7).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1409: 21st Century GI Bill of Rights Act of 2007. A bill to provide and enhance education, housing, and entrepreneur assistance for veterans who serve in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Clinton, Hillary Rodham [NY] (introduced 5/16/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Companion bill H.R.2385. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1441: State Veterans Home Modernization Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify authorities for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to accept new applications for grants for State home construction projects to authorize the Secretary to award grants for construction of facilities used in non-institutional care programs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Craig, Larry E. [ID] (introduced 5/21/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1444: Supply Our Soldiers Act of 2007. A bill to provide for free mailing privileges for personal correspondence and parcels sent to members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty in Iraq or Afghanistan. Sponsor: Sen Clinton, Hillary Rodham [NY] (introduced 5/22/07). **Cosponsors (3).** Status: Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs referred to Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security. To support this bill and/or contact your Senator refer to

[http://capwiz.com/naus/issues/alert/?alertid=9933621&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id](http://capwiz.com/naus/issues/alert/?alertid=9933621&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id)

S.1454: Veterans Burial Benefits Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase burial benefits for veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Mikulski, Barbara A. [MD] (introduced 5/23/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1468: Veterans Burial Benefits Improvement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to increase burial benefits for veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Mikulski, Barbara A. [MD] (introduced 5/23/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1480: Gold Star Parents Annuity Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the payment of a monthly stipend to the surviving parents (known as "Gold Star parents") of members of the Armed Forces who die during a period of war. Sponsor: Sen Clinton, Hillary Rodham [NY] (introduced 5/24/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1481: Fair and Reliable Medical Justice Act. A bill to restore fairness and reliability to the medical justice system and promote patient safety by fostering alternatives to current medical tort litigation, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Baucus, Max [MT] (introduced 5/24/07). **Cosponsors (2).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

S.1569: Veterans Advocacy Act of 2007. A bill to establish a pilot program on the provision of legal services to assist veterans and members of the Armed Forces receive health care, benefits and services, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Feingold, Russell D. [WI] (introduced 6/7/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1606: Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act. A bill to provide for the establishment of a comprehensive policy on the care and management of wounded warriors in order to facilitate and enhance their care, rehabilitation, physical evaluation, transition from care by the Department of Defense to care by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and transition from military service to civilian life, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Levin, Carl [MI] (introduced 6/13/07). **Cosponsors (46).** 6/18/07 Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 203.

S.1645: Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008. An original bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Reed, Jack [RI] (introduced 6/18/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar 6/18/07 under General Orders. Calendar No. 205.

S.1670: Servicemembers' Healthcare Benefits and Rehabilitation Enhancement Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to improve the management of medical care for members of the Armed Forces, to improve the speed and efficiency of the physical disability evaluation system of the Department of Defense, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Snowe, Olympia J. [ME] (introduced 6/20/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1688: Higher Education Opportunity for Our National Guard and Reserve Soldiers Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to extend the time limit for the use of education assistance by members of the Selected Reserve and members of the reserve component supporting contingency operations and certain other operations. Sponsor: Sen Casey, Robert P., Jr. [PA] (introduced 6/25/07).

Cosponsors (None). Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1718: VETS Act. A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide for reimbursement to servicemembers of tuition for programs of education interrupted by military service, for deferment of students loans and reduced interest rates for servicemembers during periods of military service, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Brown, Sherrod [OH] (introduced 6/27/07). **Cosponsors (13).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1719: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide additional educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill to veterans pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, or math. Sponsor: Sen Brown, Sherrod [OH] (introduced 6/27/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1757: Veterans' Authorities Expansion Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend or make permanent certain authorities for veterans' benefits, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (by request) (introduced 7/10/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.1763: Cold War Medal Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for the award of a military service medal to members of the Armed Forces who served honorably during the Cold War era. Sponsor: Sen Clinton, Hillary Rodham [NY] (introduced 7/11/2007). **Cosponsors (1).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.1784: Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to improve programs for veterans, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Kerry, John F. [MA] (introduced 7/12/07). **Cosponsors (6).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

S.1822: Interest Relief Act. A bill to amend the Federal Direct Loan Program to provide that interest shall not accrue on Federal Direct Loans for active duty service members and their spouses. Sponsor: Sen Bayh, Evan [IN] (introduced 7/19/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

S.1877: A bill to amend title 4, United States Code, to prescribe that members of the Armed Forces and veterans out of uniform may render the military salute during hoisting, lowering, or passing of flag. Sponsor: Sen Inhofe, James M. [OK] (introduced 7/25/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

S.1879: A bill to amend titles 10 and 37, United States Code, to reduce the minimum age of retirement for years of non-regular service for reserves who serve on active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, to increase the amount of educational assistance for members of the Selected Reserve, and to provide certain other benefits relating to service in the reserve components of the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Sen Schumer, Charles E. [NY] (introduced 7/26/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.2004: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish epilepsy centers of excellence in the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Sponsor: Sen Murray, Patty [WA] (introduced 8/3/07). **Cosponsors (3).** Latest Major Action: 12/12/07 Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 540.

S.2026: Agent Orange Equitable Compensation Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, chapter 11, to clarify that an award of benefits based on a regulatory presumption established pursuant to 28 U.S.C. section 1116 after September 30, 2002, cannot be made effective earlier than the date the regulatory presumption was established; and to clarify that the presumption of herbicide exposure provided by 38 U.S.C. section 1116(f) applies only to veterans who served in Vietnam on land or on Vietnam's inland waterways and not to those who served only in waters offshore or in airspace above. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (by request) (introduced 9/6/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.2027: Veterans' Pride Initiative Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, chapter 5, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and promote programs and activities honoring veterans and to authorize the next of kin of a deceased veteran to wear the veteran's awards and decorations under certain circumstances. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (by request) (introduced 9/6/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.2089: Medicare Prescription Drug Gap Reduction Act of 2007. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to reduce the coverage gap in prescription drug coverage under part D of such title based on savings to the Medicare program resulting from the negotiation of prescription drug prices. Sponsor: Sen Nelson, Bill [FL] (introduced 9/25/07). **Cosponsors (9).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance

S.2119: American Veterans Disabled for Life Commemorative Coin Act. A bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of veterans who became disabled for life while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States. Sponsor: Sen Johnson, Tim [SD] (introduced 10/1/07). **Cosponsors (49).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

S.2142: Veterans Emergency Care Fairness Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reimburse veterans receiving emergency treatment in non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities for such treatment until such veterans are transferred to Department facilities, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Brown, Sherrod [OH] (introduced 10/4/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Latest Status: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.

S.2160: Veterans Pain Care Act of 2007. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a pain care initiative in health care facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 10/15/07). **Cosponsors (4).** Status: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Hearings held. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.

S.2162: Mental Health Improvements Act of 2007. A bill to improve the treatment and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 10/15/07). **Cosponsors (3).** Status: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.

S.2218: Atomic Veterans Medal Act of 2007. A bill to provide for the award of a military service medal to members of the Armed Forces who were exposed to ionizing radiation as a result of participation in a test of atomic weapons. Sponsor: Sen Roberts, Pat [KS] (introduced 10/23/07). **Cosponsors (None).** Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.2309: Compensation for Combat Veterans Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the service treatable as service engaged in combat with the enemy for utilization of non-official

evidence for proof of service-connection in a combat-related disease or injury. Sponsor: Sen Akaka, Daniel K. [HI] (introduced 11/6/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.2330: Veterans Homelessness Prevention Act. A bill to authorize a pilot program within the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development with the goal of preventing at-risk veterans and veteran families from falling into homelessness, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Obama, Barack [IL] (introduced 11/8/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

S.2377: Veterans Health Care Quality Improvement Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the quality of care provided to veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, to encourage highly qualified doctors to serve in hard-to-fill positions in such medical facilities, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Durbin, Richard [IL] (introduced 11/16/07). **Cosponsors (4)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.2383: A bill to require a pilot program on the mobile provision of care and services for veterans in rural areas by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Klobuchar, Amy [MN] (introduced 11/16/07). **Cosponsors (1)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

S.2400: Wounded Warrior Bonus Equity Act. A bill to amend title 37, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Defense to continue to pay to a member of the Armed Forces who is retired or separated from the Armed Forces due to a combat-related injury certain bonuses that the member was entitled to before the retirement or separation and would continue to be entitled to if the member was not retired or separated, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Sessions, Jeff [AL] (introduced 12/3/07). **Cosponsors (18)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

S.2497: A bill to ensure that families of members of the National Guard and Reserve have full access to mental health care during the mobilization, deployment, and demobilization of such members, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen Klobuchar, Amy [MN] (introduced 12/18/07). **Cosponsors (None)**. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

[Source: <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/110search.html> 29 Dec 07 ++]