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WHAT WAR ZONE SURVIVORS CAN EXPECT AFTER RETURNING HOME

- Unemployment and homelessness remain high for military veterans.
- The Miles Foundation (a private, non-profit organization located in Newton, CT, which provides comprehensive services to victims of violence associated with the military) reports that calls to their Domestic Violence Hotline from military spouses have gone up from 50 to 500 per month since the Iraq War began.
More than 44 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who have sought treatment at a Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility have been diagnosed with one or more possible mental disorders, according to the agency's most recent summary of veteran health care. See the Navy Times, January 2008:
www.navytimes.com/news/2009/01/military_veterans_carestats_011609w/
- 190,000 military women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001. It is believed that 20 percent of servicewomen develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a debilitating, life-threatening anxiety disorder that may affect as many as 300,000 veterans of the current wars.
- Military hospitals and clinics as well as VA hospitals and clinics are underfunded, understaffed and overwhelmed with patients. It's often hard to get appointments. There's a huge backlog of patients. Too often valid claims are denied.
www.veteransforamerica.org

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This leaflet was produced by TAME: Truth and Alternatives to Militarism in Education (www.tamewisconsin.org, (608) 250-9240). For information about illnesses and injuries addressed in this flyer, contact info@tamewisconsin.org. Updated Feb 2009.



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YOUR HEALTH AND THE MILITARY

BEFORE & AFTER You Talk to a Military Recruiter



- **Talk to combat veterans or veterans who had the same job you are looking at:** Veterans for Peace: www.veteransforpeace.org, Military Families Speak Out: www.mfso.org, Iraq Veterans Against the War: www.ivaw.org.
- **Know that** when symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) appear, it's up to the individual to prove they are war-related and not due to a pre-existing condition.
- **Be aware that** in every war, death by suicide is an issue. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) reports 172 incidents of death by self-inflicted wounds among military personnel while deployed in Iraq since the war began in 2003 through February 15, 2009. Army 144, Navy 4, Marines 24, Air Force 0. (www.icasualties.org/iraq), no statistics have been released about Afghanistan. Many more have committed suicide since returning home.
- **Be aware that** sexual assault in the military is a problem for men and women. According to the VA, 15 percent of female veterans and 1 percent of male veterans of Iraq and/or Afghanistan who have sought VA health care have sought treatment for military sexual trauma.
- **Be Aware that** vaccinations are usually required before being deployed overseas. The safety and effectiveness of military vaccinations have been debated since they were first used.
- **Be aware that** during the Vietnam War the military misrepresented the dangers of Agent Orange. Today they're ignoring the dangers of depleted uranium (DU) and mandatory vaccines which have not been evaluated by the FDA, such as for Anthrax.
- **Keep in mind that** war-related physical injuries may have life-long consequences, i.e. paralysis, amputations, vision or hearing loss.
- **Be aware that** sometimes troops enter a war zone without enough and/or proper training. Protective gear and firearms don't always work. Many vehicles and tanks are ill-prepared to adequately protect against blasts from Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).



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WAR-RELATED ILLNESSES AND INJURIES ENCOUNTERED IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

DISEASE and NON-BATTLE INJURIES (DNBIs)—include (but are not limited to) infectious diseases from plant, animal and insect contact, vector-borne diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis. (U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Prevention).

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES (TBIs)

- **Open Head Injuries** – Usually caused by bullet wounds or other penetration of the skull.
- **Closed Head Injuries** – Occur due to falls, vehicular accidents, bomb blasts. The brain is soft, like jelly, and encased inside the hard skull. During rapid movement that suddenly stops and the skull hits a stationary object, the brain continues to move causing a direct brain injury.
- **Injuries Due to Explosions** – Occur as a result of “shock waves” so powerful that helmet and armor offer no protection. Injuries range from mild concussions to permanent brain damage. Symptoms can include hearing loss, impaired memory, short attention spans, confusion, headaches, anxiety, irritability, impulsivity, depression. Patients are sometimes misdiagnosed with PTSD.
- **Brain Injuries Due to Poisoning by Toxic Substances** – Caused by insecticides, defoliants, solvents, lead, mercury, depleted uranium and other toxic substances.

More info: www.mayoclinic.com/health/traumatic-brain-injury/DS00552
www.neuro.pmr.vcu.edu

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

PTSD is an anxiety disorder caused by trauma.

- **Symptoms** – Flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, avoidant behavior, increased arousal, nervousness, overreaction to sudden noises, difficulty sleeping, night sweats, and may include bouts of rage and/or depression. Symptoms may be delayed for months, even years.
- **Treatment** – Therapy and sometimes medication.

More info: www.mayoclinic.com/health/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/DS00246
www.ncptsd.va.gov (US Dept of Veterans Affairs Natl Center for PTSD)

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DEPLETED URANIUM (DU) POISONING

The U.S. Military fired more than 300 tons of DU munitions during the 1991 Gulf War, used DU munitions again during the war in the former Yugoslavia, exploded more than 1,000 tons in Afghanistan, and more than 3,000 tons all over Iraq since the current war and occupation began (Reported in *In These Times* 8/25/05). DU is a chemically toxic heavy metal AND a radioactive by-product of nuclear weapons production that the Military uses in conventional weapons and as armor coating. When DU munitions hit targets a fiery hole is burned through the armor and DU, which is slightly radioactive, is oxidized and released into the environment. DU emits alpha rays; these alpha rays are only harmful when they come into contact with cellular tissue; which can change genetic material, damage blood cells, weakening the immune system. DU can harm kidneys, lungs, bone, all body organs and can cause cancers and other debilitating diseases.

- **Symptoms** – Headaches, breathing problems, insomnia, chronic fatigue, gastrointestinal distress, loss of appetite, joint pain and stiffness, unsteady gait, burning semen, immune system deficiency, teeth crumbling, blood in urine and stools, memory loss, anxiety, mood swings, depression, death.
- **There is NO KNOWN CURE.**
- **Birth Defects** – In Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and other areas where DU weaponry has been used, there have been significant increases in children born with birth defects. Cancer rates have gone up exponentially. Some U.S. Military personnel have become ill due to DU contamination. Some children of U.S. armed forces personnel and veterans have been born with birth defects.

More info on DU - www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs257/en
www.news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/04/0418_030418_iraqenvironment_2.html
www.umrc.net, www.cadu.org.

LESSONS FROM GULF WAR I.

The ground war lasted about 100 hours, claimed 179 U.S. lives, most due to friendly fire. But of the more than 670,000 healthy troops deployed to the Gulf in 1991, about one-third now receive disability compensation, and more than 11,000 have died (including Doug Rokke, former Army physicist and director of DU clean-up after the war ended). Troops were exposed to untested vaccinations, unproven prophylactic medications, potent insect repellents, oil fires, sarin gas, DU, and more. The mysterious illnesses that resulted were eventually labeled “Gulf War Syndrome.”

More info: www1.va.gov/gulfwar, www1.va.gov/rac-gwvi

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