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Hey Folks!

The following report about "Vets Suicide" is very disturbing! No question about it!, everyone should be alarmed to the end that they take positive, correct, precise, direct-believing action to confront the problem head-on. The writer Penny Coleman should be commended for her diligence and bravery in bringing this critical information to our attention. Those of us who claim to care about our national-heritage, (veterans) should "mount-up with wings as eagles" in pursuit of a logical, educated solution to this national disgrace. We can begin by contacting every politician and national leader with clout to support, vote for, and enact legislation in favor of "Full-Mandatory Funding For Veterans Health care", nothing short of this will do!

Missing from the report "as usual", is the fact that there just aren't enough well-trained, committed-individuals who care enough to make a difference, to assist the veterans in their weakest-hour be it; in preparing for and searching for suitable employment, seeking intervention for healthcare issues or most importantly in their "dark-night of the soul hours" when life-saving compassion and powerful, intensive-spiritual intercession is absolutely essential to their, (the vet's) survival. I am not talking about "pew-potato" worldly "sin-consciousness" here, but the difference between an accurate-knowledge and recognition about the God of all-grace, all-mercy, and divine-righteousness. Remember, Jesus Christ never claimed "pew-potato" worldly-church allegiance, but rather that he came to make known the Lord God, All-Mighty, the creator of the universe and all of its contents; chief of which is God's "special-creation" which is man-kind! Surely, God our Heavenly Father who is able to save one to the uttermost could deliver his soldiers from ill-informed and devilishly-directed self-destruction. These folks coming home from the "hell of the front-line" do not need sin-condemnation, hell-fire & brimstone and reproof, but rather genuine-intensive, spiritual-compassion and understanding and genuine Godly-love. More importantly, one cannot give what one does not have or have access to. This is why we need to pray for and encourage spiritual-groups such as Prosperous Journey Troops here in America. During the last 30 years of my life I have witnessed-to, ministered-to and delivered many men and women who were on the verge of self-destruction. Everyone knows that "spiritual-wounds", more commonly-known as "psychological-wounds" cannot be healed with man-made, psychotropic-drugs and well-meaning wishful thinking patterns. I won't go into details here, but God's, "perfect-love" does "cast-out fear" which is usually at the "heart of the shame" with which society shackles our home-coming battle-weary soldiers with. The worst kind of prisons are which kind of prisons? That's right! Mental prisons! Only the rightly-divided, Word of Truth of God on the lips of a bold-loving believer can truly deliver a person from devilish spiritual prisons.

Equally important is the fact that most of these brave men and women receive the wrong-dosages, of the wrong-medications, from well-meaning, ill-informed, Pharma-Cartel personnel which more than likely accelerate the desire for them to "eliminate-themselves" from the active-roles of the VA Outpatient, Psychological PTSD Clinics; thereby saving the government millions in healthcare treatment, medicine, and compensation... And what have we read about the exploding suicide-rates of the widely-prescribed, so-called psychotropic drugs being doled-out to our most vulnerable young men and young women?

Bless you,
Pete



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120 War Vets Commit Suicide Each Week

By Penny Coleman, AlterNet

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<http://www.alternet.org/story/68713/>

Earlier this year, using the clout that only major broadcast networks seem capable of mustering, CBS News contacted the governments of all 50 states requesting their official records of death by suicide going back 12 years. They heard back from 45 of the 50. From the mountains of gathered information, they sifted out the suicides of those Americans who had served in the armed forces. What they discovered is that in 2005 alone -- and remember, this is just in 45 states -- there were at least 6,256 veteran suicides, 120 every week for a year and an average of 17 every day.

As the widow of a Vietnam vet who killed himself after coming home, and as the author of a book for which I interviewed dozens of other women who had also lost husbands (or sons or fathers) to PTSD and suicide in the aftermath of the war in Vietnam, I am deeply grateful to CBS for undertaking this long overdue investigation. I am also heartbroken that the numbers are so astonishingly high and tentatively optimistic that perhaps now that there are hard numbers to attest to the magnitude of the problem, it will finally be taken seriously. I say tentatively because this is an administration that melts hard numbers on their tongues like communion wafers.

Since these new wars began, and in spite of a continuous flood of alarming reports, the Department of Defense has managed to keep what has clearly become an epidemic of death beneath the radar of public awareness by systematically concealing statistics about soldier suicides. They have done everything from burying them on official casualty lists in a category they call "accidental noncombat deaths" to outright lying to the parents of dead soldiers. And the Department of Veterans Affairs has rubber-stamped their disinformation, continuing to insist that their studies indicate that soldiers are killing themselves, not because of their combat experiences, but because they have "personal problems."

Active-duty soldiers, however, are only part of the story. One of the well-known characteristics of post-traumatic stress injuries is that the onset of symptoms is often delayed, sometimes for decades. Veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam are still taking their own lives because new PTSD symptoms have been triggered, or old ones re triggered, by stories and images from these new wars. Their deaths, like the deaths of more recent veterans, are written up in hometown newspapers; they are locally mourned, but officially ignored. The VA doesn't track or count them. It never has. Both the VA and the Pentagon deny that the problem exists and sanctimoniously point to a lack of evidence they have refused to gather.

They have managed this smoke and mirrors trick for decades in large part because suicide makes people so uncomfortable. It has often been called "that most secret death" because no one wants to talk about it. Over time, in different parts of the world, attitudes have fluctuated between the belief that the act is a sin, a right, a crime, a romantic gesture, an act of consummate bravery or a symptom of mental illness. It has never, however, been an emotionally neutral issue. In the United States, the rationalism of our legal system has acknowledged for 300 years that the act is almost always symptomatic of a mental illness. For those same 300 years, organized religions have stubbornly maintained that it's a sin. In fact, the very worst sin.



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The one that is never forgiven because it's too late to say you're sorry.

The contradiction between religious doctrine and secular law has left suicide in some kind of nether space in which the fundamentals of our systems of justice and belief are disrupted. A terrible crime has been committed, a murder, and yet there can be no restitution, no punishment. As sin or as mental illness, the origins of suicide live in the mind, illusive, invisible, associated with the mysterious, the secretive and the undisciplined, a kind of omnipresent Orange Alert. Beware the abnormal. Beware the Other.

For years now, this administration has been blasting us with high-decibel, righteous posturing about suicide bombers, those subhuman dastards who do the unthinkable, using their own bodies as lethal weapons. "Those people, they aren't like us; they don't value life the way we do," runs the familiar xenophobic subtext: And sometimes the text isn't even sub-: "Many terrorists who kill innocent men, women, and children on the streets of Baghdad are followers of the same murderous ideology that took the lives of our citizens in New York, in Washington and Pennsylvania," proclaimed W, glibly conflating Sept. 11, the invasion of Iraq, Islam, fanatic fundamentalism and human bombs.

Bush has also expressed the opinion that suicide bombers are motivated by despair, neglect and poverty. The demographic statistics on suicide bombers suggest that this isn't the necessarily the case. Most of the Sept. 11 terrorists came from comfortable middle- to upper-middle-class families and were well-educated. Ironically, despair, neglect and poverty may be far more significant factors in the deaths of American soldiers and veterans who are taking their own lives.

Consider the 25 percent of enlistees and the 50 percent of reservists who have come back from the war with serious mental health issues. Despair seems an entirely appropriate response to the realization that the nightmares and flashbacks may never go away, that your ability to function in society and to manage relationships, work schedules or crowds will never be reliable. How not to despair if your prognosis is: Suck it up, soldier. This may never stop!

Neglect? The VA's current backlog is 800,000 cases. Aside from the appalling conditions in many VA hospitals, in 2004, the last year for which statistics are available, almost 6 million veterans and their families were without any healthcare at all. Most of them are working people -- too poor to afford private coverage, but not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid or means-tested VA care. Soldiers and veterans need help now, the help isn't there, and the conversations about what needs to be done are only just now beginning.

Poverty? The symptoms of post-traumatic stress injuries or traumatic brain injuries often make getting and keeping a job an insurmountable challenge. The New York Times reported last week that though veterans make up only 11 percent of the adult population, they make up 26 percent of the homeless. If that doesn't translate into despair, neglect and poverty, well, I'm not sure the distinction is one worth quibbling about.



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There is a particularly terrible irony in the relationship between suicide bombers and the suicides of American soldiers and veterans. With the possible exception of some few sadists and psychopaths, Americans don't enlist in the military because they want to kill civilians. And they don't sign up with the expectation of killing themselves. How incredibly sad that so many end up dying of remorse for having performed acts that so disturb their sense of moral selfhood that they sentence themselves to death.

There is something so smugly superior in the way we talk about suicide bombers and the cultures that produce them. But here is an unsettling thought. In 2005, 6,256 American veterans took their own lives. That same year, there were about 130 documented deaths of suicide bombers in Iraq.* Do the math. That's a ratio of 50-to-1. So who is it that is most effectively creating a culture of suicide and martyrdom? If George Bush is right, that it is despair, neglect and poverty that drive people to such acts, then isn't it worth pointing out that we are doing a far better job?

*I say "about" because in the aftermath of a suicide bombing, it is often very difficult for observers to determine how many individual bodies have been blown to pieces.

Penny Coleman is the widow of a Vietnam veteran who took his own life after coming home. Her latest book, *Flashback: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide and the Lessons of War*, was released on Memorial Day, 2006. Her blog is [Flashback](#).

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