



# QUALITY of LIFE in the MILITARY

**H**undreds of thousands of brave men and women in our armed forces have endured multiple lengthy deployments in war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001. Unfortunately, the Bush administration has not adequately reciprocated service members' resolve and commitment to our country.

It is not surprising that only 29 percent of active duty troops, veterans, and their families believe the Bush administration is doing a good job handling their needs. Returning veterans have confronted a litany of obstacles that have negatively affected their quality of life.

Here is a snapshot of our findings:

## Finances

Troops are battling financial burdens before, during, and after deployments.

- The president rejected the House Armed Services Committee's proposal to increase military pay by 3.5 percent.
- The administration blocked an effort to increase combat pay and family separation pay for deployed troops.
- The administration has ordered at least 1,300 battle-wounded soldiers and deceased soldiers' families to repay their service bonuses.
- Thousands of injured soldiers have been harassed by collections agents, suffered bad credit reports, and foresee future income tax hassles.
- The VA has already located over 1,500 homeless Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.
- One in every four homeless persons is a veteran.

## Medical Care

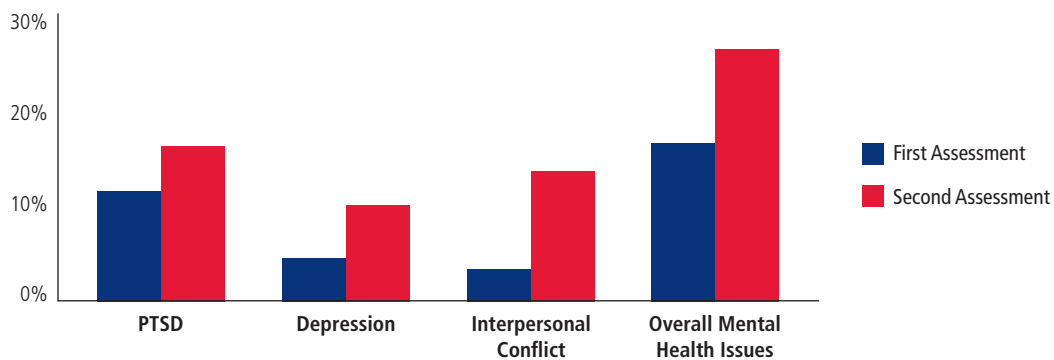
Military health care is one of the most visible signs of the Bush administration's neglect and incompetence.

- Patients, until recently, have grossly outnumbered Army primary care managers by 1200 to 1 in some major facilities. Current ratios are near 200 to 1.
- The typical soldier is required to file 22 documents with eight different commands to enter and exit the VA's medical process.
- The Army's three personnel databases are unable to read the other's files, creating crippling bureaucratic roadblocks.

## Mental Health

Prolonged and repeated tours overseas have pushed mental health to the forefront of military concern.

- One in five troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan now show signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Up to 30 percent of troops deployed to Iraq suffer from PTSD, depression, or anxiety.
- Army surveys have revealed that soldiers with repeated deployments are 50 percent more likely to suffer from PTSD.
- Army studies conclude that frequency and length of time in a combat zone are the determining factors of a service member's mental health status.
- Symptoms of mental illness take time to appear:



Source: Charles S. Milliken, MD; Jennifer L. Auchterlonie, MS; Charles W. Hoge, MD, "Longitudinal Assessment of Mental Health Problems Among Active and Reserve Component Soldiers Returning From the Iraq War," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 298 (18) (2007): 2141–2148.

## Suicide

- 2006 saw the highest suicide rate in the Army in 26 years.
- The Army's suicide rate has nearly doubled since 2001.
- Fifty-five percent of suicide cases last year involved soldiers who were serving or had served at some point over the preceding five years in Iraq or Afghanistan.

## Family Life

Multiple tours and extended deployments have wreaked havoc on the personal lives of those in uniform and their families.

- The current 15-month tours in Iraq and Afghanistan are the longest combat tours for the Army since World War II.
- Thirteen of the active Army's 43 brigades are serving their third tour in either Iraq or Afghanistan, and five brigades are serving their fourth tour since 2001.
- The administration's stop-loss policy has already affected some 70,000 enlisted soldiers.
- Divorce rates in the military nearly doubled between 2001 and 2004, and rose steadily afterward.
- Forty-two percent of service members said they felt like "a guest in their own home."
- Army surveys find that family problems and PTSD reinforce each other.