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# **THE COMBAT VETERAN IN MINNESOTA CRIMINAL COURT:**

**A Proposal to Mitigate Sentences and Encourage  
Treatment of the Most Troubled of Our Returning Heroes**

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**By**

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## I. Introduction

Increasing numbers of Iraq/Afghan War veterans are returning home with psychological injuries. Many of them are going untreated and, unfortunately, falling into criminal behavior.

Public discussion of this issue is emotionally charged and controversial. Some, including many veterans and those still serving in the military, are sensitive to public discussion of this issue. They often believe such discussion is politically motivated or intended to demonize the military and its members. They often argue that the emphasis should be focused on the majority of troops who return home and do not get into trouble.

Others, this writer included, feel that we have a duty to our most troubled veterans. Regardless of our individual stance on the war, we must recognize that these veterans' psychological injuries were sustained on our society's behalf. We must embrace them and ensure they receive the help they need to successfully transition from war to peace. Ensuring these young men and women receive the care they need will also enhance public safety in the long run.

Vietnam veterans returned home to a generally hostile American public and were stigmatized and often discarded, particularly when their psychological injuries led them into criminal activity. Our society is still paying the price for our abandonment of Vietnam veterans. A 2006 study found that fully 25% of Minnesota's male homeless population are veterans. More than half of those homeless veterans were deemed to have a "serious mental illness."<sup>1</sup>

Today, our society appears to have learned valuable lessons from the Vietnam experience. We profess a commitment to "support our troops" this time, whether we personally support or oppose the war.

The psychological community has made significant breakthroughs in the study and treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder ("PTSD") in recent years. The condition is now formally recognized in the DSM-IV, the "bible" of psychiatry. We are also recognizing that the symptoms of PTSD often manifest themselves in unlawful behavior. Fortunately, new treatment methods are showing promise. The key is to identify those in need of treatment then to ensure they get it.

To truly "Support Our Troops" we need to apply our lessons from history and newfound knowledge about PTSD to help the most troubled of our returning veterans when they come into contact with the criminal justice system. To deny the frequent connection between combat trauma and subsequent criminal behavior is to deny the evidence and to discard another generation of troubled heroes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Overview of Homelessness in Minnesota 2006*, [Wilder Research](#), March 2007, pp. 40-41.

This paper reviews the history of combat-related PTSD and its links to subsequent criminal behavior. Next, it highlights recent criminal cases involving Iraq and Afghan war veterans. It then discusses unique issues we face in dealing with these veterans in criminal court. Finally, this paper recommends legislation that will identify and diagnose troubled veterans charged with crimes, then mitigate their sentences on the condition they cooperate with specialized treatment they need to successfully and safely transition from war to peace.

## II. Historical Perspective of PTSD

The Vietnam War was the first American conflict in which significant formal attention was paid to psychological casualties. In fact, the term “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” was first coined in the context of treating troubled Vietnam veterans. This relatively recent formal recognition of the condition has led some to believe Vietnam was the first war to produce psychological casualties. In fact, PTSD has been a constant side effect of war for as long as soldiers have been sent into combat.

The first known chronicles of the psychological costs of war can be found in literary classics. Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are rich sources of information on the effects of war on a soldier’s psyche and soul. Written approximately 3,000 years ago, the *Iliad* tells the story of the great warrior, Achilles, and his psychological unraveling during the Trojan War. The *Odyssey* picks up at the end of the Trojan War and follows the often-criminal adventures of another traumatized Trojan War veteran, Odysseus (aka “Ulysses”) as he attempts to return home to Greece. Two excellent recent books, *Achilles in Vietnam* and *Odysseus in America*, by Dr. Jonathan Shay, M.D., a VA psychiatrist with twenty years of experience treating Vietnam veterans, draw insightful parallels between Homers’ characters and modern day combat veterans.<sup>2</sup>

The affliction we now call PTSD has had many names over the centuries. The cluster of symptoms was first diagnosed as “nostalgia” among Swiss soldiers in 1678. German doctors during that period called the condition *Heimweh*, while the French called it *maladie du pays* -- both meant “homesickness.” The Spanish called it *estar roto*, meaning “to be broken.” Civil War-era Americans called it “soldier’s heart,” “irritable heart,” or “nostalgia.” In World War I, it was called “shell shock.” In World War II and Korea it was “combat fatigue.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, Jonathan Shay, M.D., Ph.D., Scribner, 1994.

*Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*, Jonathan Shay, M.D., Ph.D., Scribner, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> *War and the Soul: Healing our Nation’s Veterans from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*, Edward Tick, Ph.D., Quest Books, 2005, pg. 99.

### III. Link Between PTSD and Criminal Behavior

Few formal studies have been done on the numbers of combat veterans who commit crimes when they return home. However, one study conducted shortly after World War II reported some alarming statistics. The study, entitled *Military Service and Criminality*,<sup>4</sup> published in 1952, tallied the number of men committed to 11 prisons in the upper-Midwest during 1947, 1948 and 1949 and found that fully one third of them were veterans.

World War II's most decorated soldier, Audie Murphy, who went on to become a major Hollywood star, suffered severe PTSD. He became a chronic alcoholic and prescription drug addict who admitted he slept with a loaded gun under his pillow every night. His wife reported many incidents of domestic violence including an instance in which he held a gun to her head. Audie eventually sought help for his condition and then broke the taboo against publicly discussing war-related psychological injuries. He is credited with forcing the United States government to study PTSD and extend benefits to psychologically injured veterans.

Like Homer's *Odyssey*, twentieth century literature and movies have explored the connection between combat trauma and criminal behavior. After World War I, such novels and plays as *What Price Glory?*, *They Put a Gun in My Hand*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Road Back* described this link. Modern books and movies, such as *Taxi Driver*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Apocalypse Now* and *First Blood* have done the same.

### IV. Iraq and Afghan Veterans

More than 1.6 million Americans have now served in Iraq or Afghanistan. The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder ("NCPTSD") estimates that approximately 30 percent of Vietnam veterans experience PTSD at some point in their life.<sup>5</sup> Many experts think the PTSD rate for veterans of the Iraq war could be higher than that.<sup>6</sup>

The vast majority of Vietnam veterans served a single 12 month tour in-country while many veterans of Iraq/Afghanistan will have served two, three, four or more tours. The guerilla nature of the Iraq and Afghan wars also contribute to increased levels of PTSD as combatants must be constantly on-guard against an attack that can occur at any time, in any place.

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<sup>4</sup> *Military Service and Criminality*, Walter A. Lunden, The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science, Vol. 42, No. 6 (Mar. – Apr., 1952), pp. 766-773.

<sup>5</sup> See National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder web site: <http://www.ncptsd.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> See Hazelden: *PTSD, addiction will be casualties of Iraq war*, <http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/icc30714>

Unfortunately, the Veterans' Administration ("VA") was not initially provided sufficient additional funding to handle the large influx of Iraq and Afghan vets seeking PTSD treatment. Several highly publicized scandals, one of which involved a Minnesota Marine who killed himself after reportedly being turned away from a VA hospital, has forced the government to significantly increase resources toward necessary psychological care.<sup>7</sup> Today, care for our psychologically injured veterans is improving.

## **A. PTSD-Related Criminal Cases, Nationally**

A survey of national news stories during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq reveals the classic pattern of PTSD-related criminal behavior by troubled returning veterans. The issue first received the national spotlight when Army Special Forces troops ("Green Berets") involved in the initial post-9/11 invasion of Afghanistan, returned home to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina in the summer of 2002. During a one month period after their homecoming, three of these elite soldiers shot and killed their wives during domestic altercations.<sup>8</sup> Two of the three then turned the gun on himself.

Numerous similar reports followed. Over the course of the past five years startling numbers of homicides, suicides, serious assaults, robberies, and thefts have been attributed to Iraq and Afghan veterans. **See Appendix A, attached.** Countless more DWI's, domestic altercations and other less serious incidents have, no doubt, gone unreported in the media.

## **B. PTSD-Related Criminal Cases, Locally**

Minnesota has not been immune to these national trends. We have seen a large number of domestic assaults, DWI's, and bar-room brawls. We have also seen a handful of homicides and suicides.

In June, 2005, former Marine and Iraq war vet, **Clem Tucker**, shot and killed his girlfriend during an argument. Tucker, a St. Paul native, had been a noted professional boxer before enlisting in the Marine Corps. He returned from the war and attempted to get his life back on track, working as a bouncer and VIP bodyguard. His family and friends, however, reported that he was never the same after the war and that he suffered from nightmares and flashbacks. He is currently serving a 19 year sentence in Stillwater prison.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *This Marine's Death Came After He Served in Iraq: When Jonathan Schulze Came Home From Iraq, He Tried to Live a Normal Life, But the War Kept That From Happening*, by Kevin Giles, Minneapolis Star Tribune, January 26, 2007; *Told to Wait, A Marine Dies: VA Care in Spotlight after Iraq War Veteran's Suicide*, Charles M. Sennott, The Boston Globe, February 11, 2007; and *How the U.S. Is Failing Its War Veterans*, by Dan Efron and Sarah Childress, Newsweek, March 5, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *Fort Bragg Killings Raise Alarm about Stress*, CNN, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> *The Fall of the House of Tucker*, The City Pages [2007-5-2]

In October, 2006, another former Marine and Iraq war vet, **Anthony Klecker**, caused the death of 16 year old Deanna Casey in a drunk-driving car accident. Anthony had served in the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003, participating in sustained, heavy combat. He realized he was experiencing the symptoms of PTSD but initially thought that, as a “tough Marine” he should be able to handle his problems himself. After a series of arrests for bar room fights, Anthony sought help from the VA, but became frustrated with the red tape. His alcohol consumption escalated as he attempted to self-medicate control over his symptoms. On the night of his accident, Anthony was provided several shots of hard liquor at a local bar by friends who were celebrating his safe return from the war. He turned down a cab ride as he left the bar. His blood alcohol concentration was .29. Anthony struck a temporary construction barrier as he entered the freeway, setting off a chain of collisions that killed Deanna. This writer represented Anthony in his subsequent criminal vehicular homicide case.

In January, 2007, 25 year old former Marine, **Jonathan Schultz**, committed suicide just days after seeking care from his second VA hospital. The Marine, who had earned two Purple Hearts during his service in Iraq, was told no staff was available. After speaking to a counselor over the phone, he learned he was 26th on the waiting list for one of the state's 12 beds. His parents heard him tell VA staff that he felt suicidal. His family doctor said he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, reliving combat in his sleep, [having] flashbacks. He couldn't eat, felt paranoid, struggled with relationships and admitted to drinking alcohol excessively. During his tour, 16 in his unit - many close friends - died in two afternoons of firefights and bombings. He was demoted to private and later given a general discharge for barroom violence and illegal steroid use. On the day he took his life, he had called family and friends to tell them that he was preparing to kill himself. Police smashed in the door and found him hanging from an electrical cord.<sup>10</sup>

In May, 2007, **Brian Skold**, a 28-year old Minnesota National Guard Iraq vet committed “suicide by cop.” He had fled from authorities and fired at least one shot from a 12-gauge shotgun before police returned fire, killing him. His blood-alcohol content was 0.18 percent, more than two times the legal limit for driving. Recently divorced and a father of four, the guardsman was deployed from November 2004 through December 2005 and was stationed in Baghdad. Skold's father blamed the war, saying his son was not the same since he came home. His boyhood pastor said that combat changes people. “The punishment of war is far greater than we can imagine.”<sup>11</sup>

In July 2007, Minnesota National Guard Staff Sergeant **Adam Sheda** was killed with his own handgun during a fight just one week *after* returning from an 18-month tour in Iraq. Sheda had apparently gone into Duluth for a night of drinking and gambling. He carried a handgun into town with him. After a night of

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<sup>10</sup> *This Marine's death came after served in Iraq*, Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune [2007-01-29]

<sup>11</sup> *MN Guard Member Shot On I-94 Had Suicidal Past*, [Associated Press](#) [2007-05-29]

drinking and being turned away from a Duluth casino because of his intoxication, he apparently began wandering through residential neighborhoods. He eventually happened upon a private party in the backyard of an East-Duluth residence. Sheda did not know anyone at the party, but climbed over the fence and attempted to join in. After being told to leave, he punched one of the party-goers and was set upon by several men. The fight briefly broke up and then started again when Sheda allegedly made a disparaging comment. As one of the men set upon him again, Sheda drew his gun. The man snatched the gun from the intoxicated Sheda then shot him in the head with it. Sheda had maintained a MySpace page on the internet while he served in Iraq. In one of his last entries he wrote that he would be returning home after a year and a half and his only plan was to “drink until my heart stops,” a goal that he tragically achieved<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, Minnesota is likely to see more such cases. In July, 2007 we welcomed the return of the Minnesota Guard’s 1/34<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team “Red Bulls”, a 2,600-soldier front-line infantry force who served 18 months in Iraq. The Red Bulls served a longer continuous tour in Iraq than any other unit, including all active duty units, in the U.S. military. Sgt. Sheda, mentioned above, was the first casualty of the Red Bulls’ homecoming. We must be prepared to catch others before they fall.

## **V. Special Issues Facing Veterans in Criminal Court**

Though there are laws on the books to assist veterans struggling with legal issues in the areas of employment, housing, consumer and family law,<sup>13</sup> there are currently no such protections for veterans who find themselves in criminal court. Recognizing the role a defendant’s combat service (and resulting psychological injury) may have played in his or her criminal offense and determining the appropriate sentence is handled on a case by case basis, resulting in disparate treatment of similarly situated veterans.

### **A. Recognizing a Potential Issue**

Most veterans will not readily identify themselves as such when they appear in court on a criminal charge. They are often humble regarding their service. Generally, the more combat a veteran has seen, the less likely they are to talk about it. Discussing their combat experiences can trigger anxiety and other symptoms of PTSD, thus is often avoided.

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<sup>12</sup> *A Week After Soldier Returns Home from Iraq, Tragedy*, Duluth News Tribune [2007-07-03]

<sup>13</sup> Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (“SCRA”), 50 U.S.C. App. §502-512; Minn. Stat. § 190.055 (2002).

Some Minnesota courts already inquire during the bail screening process whether a defendant has ever served in the military. A mechanism should be established to ensure that all Minnesota courts do so.

Once identified as a veteran, the attorney representing the veteran, the prosecutor or the judge should inquire whether the veteran has served in combat or another stressful military assignment and, if so, inquire whether they have ever experienced any of the major symptoms of PTSD such as anxiety attacks, hyper-vigilance, sleeplessness, extreme agitation, flashbacks, nightmares, or the use of alcohol or controlled substances to self-medicate.

## **B. Overcoming the “Taboo” of PTSD**

Veterans are returning to the civilian world from a “warrior culture” with very different rules, values and ideals. A fundamental goal of military combat training is to psychologically condition soldiers so they can function effectively in unimaginably stressful, life-threatening circumstances. A soldier’s reputation and value within their unit is based, in large part, on how “cool” they are under fire.

When soldiers experience PTSD, they often deny their symptoms to others, even to themselves. They often fear they will be labeled as “weak” by their comrades or that their military career will suffer. Though the military has come a long way in confronting this problem, many front-line combat units, faced with the pressure of maintaining combat readiness through multiple deployments, still discourage claims of PTSD.

Once a soldier leaves the military, they often carry their warrior values into civilian life. They strive to overcome PTSD symptoms on their own, reasoning that if they could survive combat, they can handle “mere mental problems” without outside assistance. Some, tragically, feel guilt for surviving the war when their buddies did not and are committed to slowly drinking and/or drugging themselves to death.

A criminal charge in this context can sometimes actually be helpful in forcing a troubled veteran to admit that he or she has a problem and needs help. These are typically very proud, honorable people who are deeply troubled by their criminal behavior and resulting charge. They are often more willing to admit they have a psychological problem related to their combat service rather than to be labeled a “criminal.”

The opportunity to avoid a criminal conviction or a lengthy jail sentence can be a key to a veteran embracing their condition and the treatment available to them. In this way, a criminal charge can often be an effective tool to get troubled veterans the help they need.

## **D. Ensuring an Accurate Diagnosis**

If initial screening indicates a veteran served in combat or other stressful service and could be suffering from PTSD, a formal diagnosis is necessary. The VA is probably best situated to diagnose and treat a veteran suffering from PTSD. Many veterans will have had some contact with the VA system and may have already been diagnosed. If the veteran has not sought help from the VA, they should be encouraged to do so.

Many veterans are currently sent for psychological screening by a court-appointed mental health professional. Because PTSD expertise varies significantly among these court-appointed experts, diagnoses are not consistent. The professionals at the VA are generally preferable in this context because of their unique expertise in dealing with combat-related PTSD

## **E. The Problem with the Status Quo**

Since there are no current statutory mechanisms to address veterans charged with crimes, their treatment in court often varies, depending on a number of factors, including: the county in which they are charged, the quality of their representation and the personal biases of the prosecutor and/or judge. Unfortunately, this leads to disparate treatment of similarly situated veterans.

In the best case, the court agrees that specialized treatment is the more logical and just alternative to a criminal conviction or a lengthy jail sentence. In cases where the criminal charge is a lower level offense, such as a misdemeanor, gross misdemeanor and low-level felonies, the prosecutor and court will often agree to stay adjudication of the veteran's conviction, allowing them to keep their criminal record clean. In more serious cases, such as felonies that call for a presumptive prison sentence, the court can often be convinced to grant a downward departure in the time to be served. These benefits usually come with the condition that the veteran must obtain all appropriate treatment through the VA or other appropriate agency, stay clean and sober and out of trouble. Very serious charges, such as intentional murders and sexual assaults will, realistically, still carry lengthy prison sentences. However, a prosecutor or judge may be willing to agree to some reduction in prison time on the basis of a veteran's military service and related psychological injuries.

In the worst case, the veteran is demonized for their criminal behavior without any heed paid to its underlying cause. They are convicted and/or locked up and do not receive the treatment they need. Most are eventually released back into society in even worse condition, posing an even greater threat to public safety.

When handled properly, a criminal charge can often be a win-win for all involved. Troubled veterans are identified and given the opportunity to avoid a criminal sanction on the condition that they obtain treatment, benefiting them, personally, and enhancing public safety.

## **VI. Proposed Legislation**

As previously noted, Minnesota does not currently provide any statutory relief for veterans accused of crimes. Legislation is currently being drafted that could change that.

### **A. California Legislation**

The California passed a law during its 2007 legislative session that provides judges with a basis to depart from presumptive prison sentences in case involving veterans with PTSD. Veterans are professionally screened for PTSD and, if suitable, are ordered to treatment in lieu of prison or jail.<sup>14</sup>

### **B. Proposed Minnesota Legislation**

A working group was formed in the summer of 2007 to discuss legislation similar that passed in California. The group consists of representatives from the defense, the prosecution, the courts, the VA, the Minnesota National Guard and the Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives. The Group's efforts have been productive and we are currently working on specific language. An outline of the proposed bill is included below.

1. Veteran is arrested.
2. Veteran is charged with a criminal offense.
3. Identification of a defendant as veteran w/ possible service-related issues.
  - a. A mechanism for identifying veterans as they enter the court system will be critica.
  - b. The veteran could be assessed for potential involvement in this program by his or her attorney, the prosecutor or the judge, similar to the way mentally ill defendants are currently assessed and referred for a "Rule 20" psychological evaluation.
  - c. We believe the veteran should be the one to ultimately decide whether he/she wants to be evaluated for possible involvement in

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<sup>14</sup> California Penal Code Section 1170.9.

this program. There will probably be veterans who choose not to participate for various reasons.

4. Referral to the VA (or other appropriate agency) for screening.
  - a. Determination by the VA that candidate is, in fact, a veteran.
  - b. Determination of whether veteran suffers from PTSD, combat stress, anxiety, depression, substance addiction, etc. that is related to their military service.
    - (1) We will have to determine which conditions qualify a veteran for this program.
    - (2) We will also have to determine what types of military experiences qualify. Combat service is the most obvious but, as we discussed in our meetings, others who did not serve in direct combat, such as graves registration, medics or sexual assault victims, may deserve the same benefit.
  - c. The VA drafts a report for the Court, outlining its findings.
5. Veteran returns to court with a report from the VA regarding their determination.
6. If the veteran is deemed appropriate, the Court:
  - a. Diverts lower level offenses, allowing the veteran to keep his/her criminal record clean.

*(I would argue that all misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor offenses should be diverted. I would also argue that some lower level felonies should be eligible for diversion, as well.)*
  - b. Stays execution of prison sentence in more serious cases. This category would be reserved for more serious felonies which carry a presumptive prison term. The veteran would still receive a criminal conviction, but instead of doing prison time, would be put on probation and referred to the VA for treatment.

*(I recognize that this remedy would not be available for the most serious felonies, such as murder, sexual assault, etc. A veteran committing these crimes might deserve some mitigation such as a shorter prison sentence.)*
7. As a condition of the diversion or stayed prison sentence the Court will order the veteran to obtain all appropriate care through the VA. If the

veteran fails to seek or complete his treatment at the VA, he/she will be returned to court where they will face the normal consequence for their underlying offense.

*(The order to obtain treatment through the VA is the most important part of this bill. Without it, this would be nothing more than a "get out of jail free" card for veterans. Instead, this is intended as a tool to force troubled vets to recognize and admit they have a problem and to leverage them into treatment they might not have otherwise sought on their own. In my experience, convincing a vet they have a problem they can't handle on their own is often the hardest part. Once they find themselves in trouble and facing a criminal charge, they are more apt to come around and admit the problem and embrace the idea of treatment. These are honorable folks who usually feel significant guilt for their criminal offense. They are faced with the choice of admitting they have a problem and need help or being labeled as a "criminal." Under those circumstances, most come around.*

*The issue of which offenses will be diverted, which will just receive stays of presumptive prison time, and which will not be eligible for any benefit will likely be the most hotly-debated aspect of this bill.)*



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## Appendix A –

The following news citations are compiled from independent research by the author, as well as from two specific web sites that compile news stories related to veterans in the criminal system:

<http://ptsdcombat.blogspot.com/2005/09/casualties-of-war-tracking-us-ptsd.html>

[http://timelines.epluribusmedia.org/timelines/index.php?&mjre=PTSD&table\\_name=tl\\_ptsd&function=search&order=date&order\\_type=ASC](http://timelines.epluribusmedia.org/timelines/index.php?&mjre=PTSD&table_name=tl_ptsd&function=search&order=date&order_type=ASC)

*December 6, 2003 - 1 suicide*

A 25 year old Army combat veteran who'd been seeing a psychiatrist was found hanging in his barracks. His wife said that he'd returned a changed man -- there were two times where she felt in danger in her own home. Twice the police had to be called to the couple's home; once, he was taken away in handcuffs. [St Louis Today: [For Some Returning Vets, War May Not Be Over yet](#)]

*February 2004 – 1 murder*

A former Marine broke his girlfriend's neck and left her to drown in the bathtub of her Oceanside apartment. The couple became romantically involved while deployed in Iraq. [Oakland Tribune: [More Iraq war veterans facing criminal charges at home](#)]

*March 9, 2004 - 1 suicide*

A 6-times decorated executive officer of the Army Reserve's 909th Forward Surgical Team having returned from combat duty in Afghanistan shot and killed himself. He was upset that he couldn't afford to pay for an attorney to fight for the City of Columbus, OH promised promotion and raise offered him in September 2002 before he left to serve. When he returned, the higher-level job had been filled and he was forced to resume his old job, which pays \$4,000 less per year. [AP: [Reservist Commits Suicide After Return](#)]

*March 18, 2004 - 1 murder*

A 39 year old former wounded Iraqi supply sergeant in the Army reserve shot his wife and buried her body in a footlocker after she'd told him she was leaving him for another man. The couple had a 7 year old daughter. [Seattle Weekly: [Home Front Casualties](#)]

*March 21, 2004 - 1 suicide*

A 36 year old warrant officer based out of Fort Carson, CO. Returning to his base following 10 months of combat duty in Iraq and 3 weeks after coming home, this Special Forces Green Beret beat his wife and threatened her with his .357-caliber revolver; put the gun to his head when police answered a domestic abuse call; and died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. [The Denver Post: [GI's Suicide Shows Failure By Us All](#)]

*April 13, 2004 - 1 charge armed robbery*

A 38 year old Fort Campbell, KY soldier who told police officers he "just couldn't take it anymore" and wanted to be locked up walked into a southeast Iowa bank, fired a large caliber handgun into the air, and demanded cash. He had only recently returned from

Iraq as a member of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division (the division had lost 58 Fort Campbell soldiers in Iraq in 2003). After he left the bank, he climbed into his pickup truck and drove to the police department, where he turned himself in. [WKRN: [Ft. Campbell Soldier Robs Iowa Bank](#)]

**April 21, 2004 - 1 murder**

A 31 year old Army sergeant based at Fort Lewis, WA, who'd returned just weeks earlier from Iraq, drowned his wife in the bathtub of an apartment they'd begun sharing. On April 10th, the woman had gone to authorities and told them her husband had pushed her and threatened to kill her; two days later she'd obtained a temporary restraining order. Apparently, they'd been fighting due to an affair he'd had with a fellow soldier in Iraq. The couple had a 10 year old son. [KOMO News: [Fort Lewis Soldier Arrested for Allegedly Killing His Wife](#)]

**April 24, 2004 - 1 charge aggravated assault**

A 23 year old Iraqi combat veteran based out of Camp Lejeune, NC who'd served in al-Nasiriyah and Tikrit attached as a specialist to the 4th Marine Infantry Division, was arrested for firing a shot at a Philadelphia University District 'Ambassador' - one of 35 unarmed officers who pedal around school neighborhoods assisting students and watching out for disturbances. The incident occurred on a Friday night, and drinking may have been involved. [Philadelphia CityPaper.net: [A Bitter Homecoming](#)]

**May 27, 2004 - 1 suicide**

A 33 year old staff sergeant (based out of Fort Jackson, SC), state trooper, and Gulf War I vet returned from a year's deployment in Iraq afraid of seeking psychological help because of what it might mean for his career. His wife, nonetheless persuaded him to call an Army program that helps soldiers find treatment; but, he lied on the phone, answering 'no' when asked if he thought of harming himself. Just a few hours later, with his stepdaughter playing outside, the National Guardsman shot himself in the heart only 5 weeks after returning home as his wife rushed to try to knock the gun out of his hand. [North County Times: [Stretched Thin -- Concern Mounts Over Soldiers' Mental Health Care](#)]

**June 2, 2004 - 1 murder**

An army reservist based out of Portland, OR, after having just returned from Iraq a few months prior, was arrested for first degree murder and held on \$250,000 bond. His wife's body was found in a van near their apartment - a fatal bullet shot through her throat. The couple's daughter was in the custody of Child Protective Services. [USA Today: [Soldier Arrested After Police Find Wife's Body in Van](#)]

**June 22, 2004 - 1 suicide**

A 23 year old Marine Reserve who fought in the battle of Nasiriyah hung himself a year after returning home from military duty. In late May 2004, his parents had involuntarily committed him to a military veteran's hospital after he ignored pleas to seek help. The hospital discharged him after a few days. Three weeks later, he was dead -- the dog tags of two Iraqi prisoners he said he was forced to shoot unarmed, lay on his bed. [Democracy Now!: [Parents Mourn Son's Suicide After Returning From Iraq Duty: "He's a Casualty of War But He'll Never Be Known As That"](#)]

**July 4, 2004 - 1 murder**

A 24 year old member of the Army National Guard with an otherwise clean record, and following a year of combat duty in Iraq, shot to death a friend. The incident occurred only a few months after the vet's return home. The former school friends had argued and physically fought earlier in the evening; the soldier returned later, that meeting resulting in

the victim being shot nine times with a 9mm pistol, hitting five times including twice in the back. [Press & Dakotan: [Iraq Vet Sentenced For Slaying](#) ]

**August, 2004 - 1 suicide**

A 40 year old Special Forces Sergeant based out of Fort Carson, CO shot himself six weeks after he returned from Iraq. He had recently been arrested for allegedly arranging to have sex with an undercover officer who had posed on the Internet as a 13-year-old girl. He was married, and the father of two. [The Mercury News: [Special Forces Suicides Raise Questions](#)]

**August 18, 2004 - 1 suicide**

A 48 year old New Hampshire National Guardsman died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound a mere day after returning home from Iraq. [Veterans for Common Sense: [Death Rocks Counselors Who Work With Soldiers Returning from War](#)]

**September 13, 2004 - 2 murders**

Two 23 year old infantry battalion sergeants were arrested for the shooting, premeditated murder, deaths of two fellow soldiers over fears they would be turned in to civilian or military investigators for a Kansas farm drug operation. All soldiers were attached to the 1st Battalion, 34th Armor, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, 2/3 of which had recently returned to Fort Riley from their second tour of duty in Iraq (where 4 others had been court-martialed for the deaths of Iraqi civilians). [Kansas State Collegian: [Soldier Arrested in Murder Case](#)]

**October 8, 2004 - 1 domestic assault, 1 suicide**

A 37-year-old Fort Eustis, VA soldier (returned only the month earlier) from Iraq hanged himself in jail over the weekend. Police say he hanged himself with a bed sheet early Saturday in the Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail in James City, about 12 hours after being arrested on a charge of assaulting his wife at their York County home. In the four weeks since his return, deputies responded to about six complaints against McKeehan by his wife and a neighbor. [ABC 7 News: [Soldier Just Back From Iraq Hangs Himself In Jail](#)]

**October 14, 2004 - 1 murder**

A 22 year old Fort Riley, KS soldier was arrested for the murder of a Chicago store manager in an armed robbery. The Army Specialist was attached to the 1st Battalion, 34th Armor, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, 2/3 of which had recently returned to Fort Riley from their second tour of duty in Iraq (where 4 others had been court-martialed for the deaths of Iraqi civilians). [Kansas State Collegian: [Soldier Arrested in Murder Case](#)]

**December 14, 2004 - 1 aggravated assault, conspiracy, and a weapons violation**

A 24 year old Fort Bragg, NC supply specialist who had spent seven months in Iraq, was distraught about having to return to combat duty and wanted to stay with his family. With the help of his wife and a civilian (the wife's cousin), he drove to a wooded area in northwest Philadelphia, where the civilian shot the soldier once in the back of the leg with the wife's .22-caliber pistol. The combat veteran had seen some of his friends KIA in Iraq and was worried about returning. [NEPA News: [Man Gets 15-30 Months in Prison for Staged Shooting of Soldier](#)]

**May 9, 2005 - 1 attempted suicide, aggravated assault, other charges**

A 22 year old blind, severely injured Iraq veteran was rescued after being dropped off at a PA bike trail along the Youghiogheny River and disappearing a day after threatening suicide. After losing his eyesight, left leg, and part of his hearing while defusing a bomb in a dusty Baghdad lot, the Army soldier came back to a hometown parade and a community that hailed him as a hero. But, he suffered from depression and had a couple of run-ins with police -- including a fight with 3 patrons and 2 police officers in a

Uniontown bar resulting in his facing trial on aggravated assault and other charges. [Post-Gazette: [Searchers Find Blind, Suicidal Iraq Veteran Alive](#)]

**July 9, 2005 - 1 suicide**

A 21-year old Iraq veteran attached to the 10th Special Forces Group based at Fort Carson, CO hanged himself in the post barracks about a month after returning from Iraq. [The Mercury News: [Special Forces Suicides Raise Questions](#)]

**July 12, 2005 - 1 murder**

A 19-year old Iraqi infantryman based out of Fort Lewis, WA who'd seen action in Mosul and had suffered head injuries after being thrown from a vehicle by a bomb explosion in March for which he received a Purple Heart, stabbed his 18 year old wife to death on base. He had been receiving counseling for behavioral problems. [Seattle Times: [Soldier Charged in Wife's Death](#)]

**July 13, 2005 - 1 overdose**

A 22-year old FL Army veteran just returned from Iraq was found dead in his home of an overdose; initially, police arrested his estranged wife at the cemetery minutes after burial on suspicions of giving Xanax, an anti-depression drug to him. She was later released following the Medical Examiner's findings showing oxycodone was responsible for the death of the Iraq and Afghanistan vet. Two others are now in custody. [News4JAX: [Man, Woman Charged With Manslaughter In Soldier's Overdose Death](#)]

**July 28, 2005 - 1 murder, 1 suicide**

A 20 year old Marine based out of Camp Lejeune, NC and mysteriously, but honorably, discharged in February (and as of yet not a confirmed combat veteran - the military blaming a `disjointed database and filing system' for the delay in confirmation), killed his newly-enlisted 18-year old girlfriend with a shot to the back and then turned the shotgun on himself in Washington State. [Bellingham Herald: [Rech's Military Background is Explored](#)]

**July 29, 2005 - 1 possible suicide (death from natural causes?)**

A Fort Riley, KS soldier was found dead in his quarters; no foul play is expected. The soldier was assigned to the 82nd Medical Company of the 541st Maintenance Battalion, and had served two stints in Iraq. [FOX 4 News: [Investigation Begins into Death at Fort Riley](#)]

**August 2, 2005 - 1 murder, 1 injury**

A 20 year old Iraqi veteran (who'd served in the 4th Infantry Division from Fort Hood, TX and sought treatment for PTSD after his return), was arrested for the shooting death of a man and woman in a Las Vegas alley. The returning soldier was on a 1 am beer run to a 7-Eleven, wearing a black coat with an assault rifle tucked under his arm. The couple had apparently yelled at him to get out of an alley. After firing on them, the young soldier fled the scene and returned to his apartment for more ammunition. [Las Vegas Review-Journal: [Iraq Veteran Arrested in Killing](#)]

**August 3, 2005 - 1 murder, 1 suicide**

A 35 year old Fort Carson, CO 2nd Brigade Combat Team soldier who 9 days earlier had arrived stateside after being sent into combat in Iraq for a year from a South Korea base, shot his wife five times in the head and neck with a pistol before killing himself with a shotgun blast to the head. The couple were the parents of a toddler; neighbors said the soldier had signed up with the Army in Jan. 2004 for access to health benefits because his wife was expecting a baby. [Colorado Springs Gazette: [Carson Soldier Kills Wife, Himself](#)]

**August 7, 2005 - 1 suicide**

A 23 year old Iraq combat vet, only 11 days earlier decorated with the Army's Combat Action Badge, shot himself in Tacoma, WA. [Seattle Weekly: [Home Front Casualties](#)]

**August 12, 2005 - 2 injuries**

A soldier named 'Marine of the Year' for his Iraq service was arrested after firing upon a 15 year old girl and 20 year old man leaving a Massachusetts night club. The soldier's wife told police that her husband had been drinking and they'd been arguing shortly before the shooting. The couple have two children. The soldier was being held on \$100,000 bail. [The Boston Globe: [Police: Decorated Marine Opened Fire on Noisy Crowd](#)]

**September 7, 2005 - 2 murders**

A 22 year old Fort Lewis, WA soldier was arrested and held on \$2 million bond in connection with the shooting deaths of a fellow soldier and a woman shot multiple times as they sat in their car outside a tavern. Police suspected the crime was a botched burglary attempt. The military refused to give any information regarding the soldier, so it's unknown if he'd served overseas or not. [The Seattle Times: [Soldier Arrested, Bail Set in Fatal Double Shooting](#)]

**September 16, 2005 - 1 kidnapping, robbery, and rape**

A 25 year old Army Sergeant (unclear if a combat veteran from this report) based at Fort Campbell, TN kidnapped his former girlfriend at gunpoint, forced her to drive to an ATM to withdraw money, and then returned to her home to rape her. After being placed under house arrest at the base, he stole a vehicle and left the post. He was later arrested. [WTVF: [Fort Campbell Soldier Arrested; Charged with Kidnapping, Robbery and Rape](#)]

**September 19, 2005 - 2 charges of theft, burglary, and assault**

Attempting to steal hogs from an Iowa farm, two recently returned (and soon to be redeployed) Iraqi veterans -- one 21, the other 23 years old -- based out of Fort Riley, SD and part of Company-B of the 101st Forward Support Battalion of the First Brigade, First Infantry Division severely beat two 52 year old farmers who'd caught them in the act. After beating them, the soldiers tied them to a fence; the victims were being treated for injuries that included a broken arm, skull fractures, cuts, broken facial bones and bruised eyes. [AP: [Soldiers Arrested in Farmer Beating](#)]

**October 7, 2005 - 1 charge discharging firearm in a municipality after 3-hour police standoff**

A 29-year old Army veteran who'd signed up for military service 2 days after the September 11th attacks was arrested in El Paso, TX, after a three-hour standoff in which he fired a 9-millimeter handgun in his apartment. His family said he's suffering from PTSD and that he's fallen through the cracks of the Army mental health system since he returned two years ago to Fort Bliss, TX. The Army medic had received national attention when photographed carrying a terrified, half-naked Iraqi child to safety in March of 2003, becoming a potent symbol of American heroism. His sister says that at first he didn't like the fame it earned him; now, he's hoping "that picture can be associated with post-traumatic stress." [El Paso Times: [Iraq Vet 'Needs Help'](#)]

**December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 - 1 murder, 1 suicide**

A 42-year old former Marine sergeant and Afghanistan combat vet shot and killed his 77-year old father, later turning the gun on himself; he'd called his VA counselor in distress saying he wouldn't be coming in the next day. His former fiancé said that after he'd returned home from duty he couldn't sleep; continuously paced; started using alcohol to cover his pain; and dreamed about one specific incident repeatedly. "Scheduled to fly on a mission, [a]t the last minute, he was reassigned. [T]he plane he was supposed to be on, a KC-130 transport, smashed into a mountain, killing eight of his fellow Marines. He

went on the recovery mission and helped search for the body parts of his buddies." Once home, he participated in PTSD counseling/support group for 2 years where he'd expressed guilt for not being on the plane that had killed his fellow Marines. His fiancé explained, "[He] told me personally . . . 'We are all in for a whole lot of trouble when all these boys come back from Iraq and Afghanistan'... The military lures them into service and trains them for war, but they don't take care of them when they come back..." [Los Angeles Times: [Time at War Haunted Man Who Killed Dad, Himself](#)]

**January 25, 2006 - 1 murder**

A 20-year old Army National Guard veteran who'd returned from Iraq only a month earlier following a year's deployment, confessed to killing a 79-year old man he was working for. The day prior to the murder, he was suspected of participating in a theft. "[The victim] often employ[ed] neighborhood children and troubled teens in his auction business and the small repair shop which he operated from his basement." An employee had overheard an unsettling conversation between the two men the night before; this same employee found the victim's body after having been bludgeoned and strangled to death. The soldier's family stated he'd been having trouble since returning from Iraq, including "issues with drugs." [ABC Chicago - Channel 7 [2006-01-26]: [Iraq War Vet Charged in Murder of 79-year-old Man](#)]

**January 29, 2006 - 1 high-speed chase**

A former senior airman in the Air Force who had just returned from Iraq took part in a high-speed chase with Chino, California police. The incident became a nation story when a former sheriff's deputy shot the airman as it was captured on videotape. "The videotape of the Jan. 29 shooting, which has been widely broadcast by the media, was among the most compelling pieces of evidence produced by prosecutors." [Inland Valley [CA] Daily Bulletin [2006-08-29]: [Deputy charged with shooting Iraq veteran](#)]

**February 20, 2006 - 1 murder, 1 suicide**

A 36-year old Air Force Tech Sgt. based out of Scott AFB broke into his estranged wife's parent's home (where she and her 9 year old son were staying) by breaking in the door in the early morning hours. He shot his wife in the presence of their son, and then turned the gun on himself. He'd left a recording at his apartment explaining what he was going to do and why. The airman has been "assigned to the 375th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, which evacuates injured soldiers from combat areas and transports them to military hospitals. ... [He'd] been stationed with them in southwestern Asia and had flown in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom." His last deployment ended in April 2005. [Belleville News-Democrat [Southern IL/St. Louis Metro] [2006-02-22]: [Police Continue Murder-Suicide Probe](#)]

**February 21, 2006 - 1 murder**

A 30-year old Fort Stewart soldier was charged with murdering his recent wife. The couple, who'd met while serving in Iraq, had married only a month prior. The victim, a Fort Bragg sergeant was "assigned to Delta Detachment, 18th Personnel Services Battalion, 18th Soldier Support Group." She was found strangled to death after she'd not shown up for work; her supervisor and an officer arrived at her home to investigate and found the back door was forced open. The couple had kept to themselves and were not known very well by neighbors, but one "remembered seeing the man who lived in the house Feb. 10 with a careful of Valentine's Day balloons." [Fayetteville [NC] Observer [2006-02-24]: [Dead Sgt.'s Husband is Charged](#)]

**February 21, 2006 - 1 charge aggravated robbery**

A 23-year old Fort Hood soldier was charged with aggravated robbery. "The arrest came after the man, wearing a camouflage military uniform, robbed the business at about 11 a.m. Tuesday and then fled in a gold Ford Taurus. As dispatchers broadcast information about the robbery, the deputy city marshal spotted a man who matched the description of

the robber pumping gasoline into a vehicle that matched the description of the getaway vehicle." Early reports do not list him specifically as having served overseas; however, Fort Hood soldiers had only 5 days prior to this robbery returned to base from Kuwait. Fort Hood has been one of the most deployed units in the army. [KWTX News Channel 10 [Waco, TX] [2006-02-22]: [Fort Hood Solder Charged In Cleaning Business Robbery](#)]

**March 31, 2006 - 1 charge attempted robbery and carrying a concealed weapon**

A 22-year old former Marine who'd served in Iraq was arrested by two undercover police officers outside of a Montana casino. He had piqued the interest of the officers because he was "carrying a fully loaded .38-caliber pistol, 26 additional rounds of ammunition and a lock-blade knife. He was wearing camouflage fatigues, black hand and face paint, and a ski mask." Earlier in the year, the Marine's 6-week old son had "died from complications after he was born nearly four months premature...due to carbon monoxide poisoning, which occurred while [he] and his wife were attending a Marine birthday ball. A leak from the pool's heating system poisoned more than 40 partygoers." The couple had been sunk into debt of medical bills. At his arraignment, the judge acknowledged "potential issues of post-traumatic stress disorder and potential drug abuse' stemming from [his] military service and his combat in Iraq, and said the court would take steps to address those issues." [The Missoulian [Missoula, Montana] [2006-04-08]: [Man Found Near Casino Faces Attempted Robbery Charge](#)]

**April 6, 2006 - 1 self-caused death**

A 22-year old Marine, after a night spent drinking heavily with friends, suddenly exited the car he was riding in and ran into traffic on a California interstate killing himself when a minivan hit him. He had returned from serving a seven month tour in Iraq only 5 days earlier. [The Press-Enterprise [Riverside, CA] [2006-04-07]: [Marine Home from Iraq Killed While Walking on I-15](#)]

**April 7, 2006 - 1 suicide attempt**

A 24-year old former Iraq veteran and Marine attempted suicide by using a knife to slash his forearm as a number of friends and relatives tried to stop him. Apparently, he'd "been drinking heavily and wanted to call his wife, from whom he was recently separated." After he was discouraged by friends, he used his knife on himself and then "began stabbing the floor of the apartment." Police had also been called to the scene, which after hearing that a gunshot had been heard coming from the apartment prepared for a barricade or hostage situation. Eventually, the former veteran came out from his apartment and collapsed only to be revived later, fighting off the police as he came to who were trying to subdue him. They did so with an electric stun gun before transporting him to a local hospital. [Riverside/Brookfield Landmark [Oak Park, IL] [2006-04-11]: [Potential Riverside Barricade Incident Turns Out to be Suicide Attempt](#)]

**April 22, 2006 - 1 charge aggravated robbery, 1 burglary, 2 driving under the influence**

A 24-year old soldier based out of Fort Carson, CO and member of the Second Brigade Combat Team (although not noted in this press report, did see service in Iraq) was "being held on \$100,0000 bond Wednesday in connection with the theft of several weapons from an El Paso County pawn shop.... He is suspected of holding up Big Jim's Loans at gunpoint on the morning of April 22. The robber escaped with several guns, a wallet, and cash. ... Investigators said Jenkins then tried to get rid of the guns at two other pawn shops the next week." At the time of his arrest, this troop was also absent without leave. [ABC-7 [Denver, CO] [2006-05-10]: [Fort Carson Soldier Arrested After Weapons Robbery](#)]

**May 24, 2006 - 1 AWOL/attempted suicide/police stand-off**

A 23-year old Iraq veteran who had served two tours in Iraq with the 10th Mountain Division based out of Fort Drum, N. Y., returned home with PTSD. While in Iraq, he "was

a firefight after an ambush near Abu Ghraib. Three insurgents were killed. [He] took a bullet to the chest. His Kevlar vest saved his life." The incident would lead to stateside depression and a charge of desertion (later dropped to going AWOL) when he refused to return to base. He told his family, "that he had nothing left to live for anymore, that his country gave up on him," and that he was "dead inside" and "a killer machine now." His family "repeatedly called Fort Drum and a local military chaplain" for help but were told by his sergeant that "we've all been through a lot." The morning of the incident, his mother found him attempting to hang himself, but "he was too heavy for the cord and it broke." He then barricaded himself in his home, "armed with a handgun and high-power rifle." After a nine-hour police stand-off, he surrendered after being flushed out with teargas. [CNN - Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees [2006-11-13]: [Coming Home](#)]

#### **July 2006 – 1 carjacking**

An Iraq war veteran, in the midst of a PTSD flashback, carjacked his neighbor's vehicle. [Oakland Tribune: [More Iraq war veterans facing criminal charges at home](#)]

#### **August 6, 2006 - 1 charge kidnapping, first-degree attempted murder, two counts of third-degree assault, and second-degree assault**

A 24-year-old Army soldier who "served with the 82nd Airborne, 101st Division, 18th Air Assault, in two tours in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. In the 2005 Homer [AK] Veterans Day Parade, he rode in uniform in a vintage Army Jeep and was honored for his service by local veterans." At his indictment, he was charged with having "restrained his wife against her will and assaulted her, and that two accomplices ... helped him. Craddock's wife alleged she was taken to Skyline Drive, thrown around by the hair, punched and beaten, and then taken to the Homer Spit. [Morris News Service - Alaska [2006-08-22]: [Vet charged with trying to kill wife](#)]

#### **August 7, 2006 - 1 armed bank robbery**

Three U.S. Army Rangers based out of Fort Lewis committed a "military-style" robbery with "military-style precision and planning," recruiting two Canadians to help. "On the day of the robbery, the 192 soldiers of C Company, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment [one of the Army's elite special operations units] were given two weeks leave. According to FBI ..., the three Rangers along with [the two accomplices] hit the bank late that afternoon in "an extremely well organized and executed robbery. Wearing dark-colored balaclavas over their faces, two or three entered from the east entrance and two from the west entrance. Two were carrying AK-47-style assault rifles with "banana style" magazines holding extra ammo. They kept watch as one robber counted time out loud. Another robber "jumped over the teller counter and the bandit barrier" and ordered the tellers to fill his bag with \$50 and \$100 bills. Some of the robbers appeared to be wearing soft body armor under their clothing." It was not completely clear if all three Rangers had served in Iraq, but their unit had only recently returned from an Iraq deployment. [Seattle Post-Intelligencer [2006-08-15]: [Bank raid suspect appears in court](#)]

#### **October 17, 2006 - 1 Murder, 1 Suicide**

28-year old Army MP, after being honorably discharged, returned to the French Quarter, LA, haunted by his memories of Iraq. After bouts of drinking, depression and self-mutilation he killed himself after killing and dismembering his fiancé. They both had survived Katrina and had been interviewed several times as survivors by local news such as Times-Picayune. His suicide note mentioned not that he had strangled his fiancé, but he was horrified at his lack of remorse. Rumors of preparing the body of his fiancé for cooking were not supported by police reports. "A fellow bartender told the New Orleans Times-Picayune that after downing rounds of Miller High Life and Jameson's Irish Whiskey, Bowen would grow depressed when talking about his military service, indicating that there was an overseas incident involving a child that haunted him." "I scared myself not by the action of calmly strangling the woman I've loved for one and a half years ... but

by my entire lack of remorse," wrote Bowen in the note. [[ABC News \[2006-10-20\]: Iraq War Hero Murder/Suicide](#)]

**November 2, 2006 - 1 aggravated assault, battery, criminal mischief, and improper exhibition of a firearm**

A 24-year old Army soldier was arrested "charged ... with assault after witnesses say he brandished a gun at some hotel guests. ... His girlfriend told police she tried to calm him down, but he took her money, smashed her belongings and threw her on the floor. After police arrested [the] 24-year-old, he allegedly became irate and began hitting the plastic divider in the patrol car with his head. He was taken to a hospital where he received four stitches before being taken to jail." It was not determined if this soldier had served in combat. [[Associated Press \(Miami Herald\) \[2006-11-03\]: Margate Soldier Arrested for Brandishing Gun](#)]

**November 30, 2006 – 1 assault, criminal damage to property, possession of explosives, drug possession**

A college student/ Iraq war vet was arrested for assaulting and threatening his roommate and then explosive devices and drugs were discovered in a subsequent search of his apartment. The roommate also alleged that the veteran had recently killed a cat and hung it from a flag pole in front of his college ROTC building and used an explosive device to destroy a Virgin Mary statue on campus. The veteran was diagnosed with PTSD and Bi-Polar Disorder. [[Associate Press \[2006-11-30\]: After Iraq, Vet faces war Within](#)]

**December 25, 2006 - 10 charges, including 2 counts homicide by intoxicated use of a motor vehicle**

A 19-year old soldier home on leave from Iraq was speeding, drunk, and eventually crashed his vehicle into oncoming traffic, rolling over from the impact several times. One passenger from his vehicle was ejected and killed on the scene; the driver of the other car died later of his injuries in the hospital. Prosecutors charged his behavior was outrageous, showing disregard not only for the safety of the his friends but for the general public. A blood test showed the blood alcohol concentration was nearly 0.14 percent, double the legal limit. "Military officials are aware of the situation and the potential charges. They certainly will not redeploy him back into active duty until civilian court matters are resolved," Feldman said. [[WISC-TV \(Madison, WI\) \[2007-01-02\]: Bail Set For Man Accused In Fatal Christmas Night Crash](#)]

**January 4, 2007 - 2 counts of vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence**

A 21-year old soldier slated to return to Iraq within days "triggered a car crash...that claimed the lives of two teen girls...when he struck an upturn in the road and his [vehicle] became airborne. ...The vehicle flipped, throwing [two female passengers], both 17, out of the vehicle." After receiving treatment for his own injuries, the soldier was "returned to military service" and was not deployed due to the pending case. Investigation revealed he and the passengers had been out drinking before the crash. A warrant for his arrest was issued; three months later, the soldier was pulled over for a traffic infraction and arrested. [[San Bernardino Sun \[2007-03-30\]: Soldier involved in deadly crash arrested](#)]

**February 4, 2007 - 1 charge intoxication manslaughter**

A 25-year old Marine who'd served three tours in Iraq was "charged with intoxication manslaughter after police say he caused a three-car wreck Sunday that killed a 27-year-old mother." A relative and VFW post commander said he "struggled to adjust to civilian life and used alcohol to cope" since returning from his last tour, about 10 months prior to the incident. "[He] was first deployed to Iraq soon after the war started in 2003, and received the Purple Heart after shrapnel struck him during combat." The veteran's lawyer said he has PTSD. [[KGBT- TV-4 \(Rio Grande Valley\) \[2007-02-06\]: Marine claims post-traumatic war disorder in crash that killed Pharr mother](#)]

**July 9, 2007 - 1 charge conspiracy, filing a false report**

A 20-year old Fort Hood soldier home on a two-week leave following a 10-month Iraq deployment, and slated to return for another eight months the very day he “hired a hit man to shoot him in the leg so he could stay home,” later told reporters, “I have nightmares all the time. I hear people screaming, gunshots, explosions, and I can smell burning flesh in my dreams... I was not going back one way or another. Some people can handle it mentally, but some can't... I was desperate to stay home and at the end of my rope.” His mother says he returned a “shell of the man” he was. “On his first day of combat [he] said a female sergeant killed herself in the middle of chow hall, an image he can't get out of his mind.” His parents and lawyer say that a private doctor had diagnosed him with PTSD. His wife of 10 days helped him to arrange for a hit man to shoot him in the knee, paying him \$500. After returning to base, he said he “has felt the scorn of other soldiers - through stares and words,” some saying “You're a piece of s---.” [New York Daily News [2007-07-15]: [G.I. in shoot scam: better shot in Bronx than in Baghdad](#)]

**July 21, 2007- 1 aggravated felonious sexual assault**

A 29-year old former Camp Pendleton Marine who'd served in Iraq was “charged with sexually assaulting a 19-year old woman at a co-worker's wedding reception” when he allegedly forced “himself upon a ... woman while she was sleeping in the back of a parked car at the reception.” Police said the woman was “brutally attacked and raped.” The Marine's father said his son “has been a different person since he served in Iraq. ...I think the war really messed his brain up.” He had asked his son to go see a doctor because he was “talking nonsense since he came home, saying that he saw a lot of dead bodies. ... Growing up, my son was a nice, respectful person. This is the first time he has ever been involved in something like this.” [Associated Press [2007-07-24]: [Man charged with sexually assaulting teen at wedding reception](#)]