



OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM/ IRAQI FREEDOM REVIEW GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

www.va.gov/Environagents/

Information for Veterans Who Served in Iraq and Afghanistan and Their Families

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PEAKE TAKES ACTIONS TO SUPPORT NEW COMBAT VETERANS

Dr. James B. Peake, Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA), has emphasized outreach to new veterans as a focus during the current conflicts since assuming office. VA's recent efforts include appointment of a panel of national suicide experts with the goal of reducing veteran suicides. This follows the establishment of a VA suicide hotline in 2007 in order to ensure veterans with mental health crises have immediate access to trained coordinators twenty-four hours a day. More recently, VA announced that it is contacting nearly 570,000 recent combat veterans to ensure they know about VA medical services and other benefits. In addition, Secretary Peake will continue the program of sending letters to all who have been released from active duty and are eligible for VA benefits (including those who continue to serve in the Reserves or National Guard). Included in the letter from Secretary Peake is a statement regarding enhanced eligibility for combat veterans and contact information for those seeking additional information.

Secretary Peake stressed his commitment to easing the transition of our current generation of returning, combat experienced men and women and of "the opportunity to look to the future of this newest generation of combat veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan – getting it right for them and for their families." "We will reach out and touch every veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom to let them know we are here for them," said Dr. Peake.

"VA is committed to getting these veterans the help they need and deserve." Secretary Peake continued, "You need to know that I believe deeply in the mission; and that I believe in you. I know quite a number of you already. I've seen the ethic, the caring, the compassion, and the technical skills."

Dr. Peake, a combat veteran of the Vietnam War and former Army Surgeon General, was sworn in by President George W. Bush as the Nation's sixth Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(Continued on page 2)



Dr. James B. Peake
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

FIVE YEARS OF VA HEALTH CARE FOR COMBAT VETERANS

Peake: Honoring Commitment to Newest Combat Veterans

Military veterans who served in combat since November 11, 1998, including veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, are now eligible for enhanced enrollment opportunities that provide cost-free medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for conditions potentially related to service in the theater of combat operations for a 5-year

post-discharge period. This measure increases a 2-year limit that has been in effect for nearly a decade.

"By their service and their sacrifice, America's newest combat veterans have earned this special eligibility period for VA's world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

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(Peake Sworn in as VA Secretary, page 1)

“Dr. Peake takes office at a critical moment in the history of this Department,” said President Bush. “Our Nation is at war – and many new veterans are leaving the battlefield and entering the VA system. This system provides our veterans with the finest care.”

A native of St. Louis and graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Peake attended medical school after serving in Vietnam, where he earned the Silver Star and Purple Heart.

Peake, who retired in 2004 as a three-star general, is a board-certified thoracic surgeon. His commands included the U.S. Army Medical Command, headquartered at Ft. Sam Houston, TX; Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, WA; the 44th Medical Brigade at Fort Bragg, NC; and the 18th Medical Command in Seoul, South Korea.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Peake assumes leadership of the second largest Cabinet department, with about 250,000 employees and a budget last year exceeding \$82 billion.



(Five Years of VA Health Care, page 1)

The 5-year post-discharge period has no effect upon veterans with medical conditions VA determines are related to their military service. Veterans may apply at any time after their discharges from the military — even decades later — for medical care for service-connected health problems.

The new provision, part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 signed by President Bush on January 28, 2008, applies to care in a VA hospital, outpatient clinic or nursing home. It also extends the application period for VA dental benefits for veterans who were not provided necessary dental care prior to their discharges — previously limited to 90 days after discharge for most veterans — to 180 days.

Combat veterans who were discharged between November 11, 1998 and January 16, 2003, and who never enrolled in VA’s health care system, may apply for this enhanced enrollment opportunity through January 27, 2011.

This 5-year post-discharge period is also open to activated Reservists and members of the National Guard if they served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Veterans who take advantage of this 5-year post-discharge period will continue to receive care after five years, although certain veterans may have to pay copayments for medical problems unrelated to their military service.

Copayments currently range from \$8 for a 30-day supply of prescription medicine to \$1,024 for the first 90 days of inpatient care each year. For additional information, please call toll-free **1-877-222-VETS (8387)** or visit us online at www.va.gov/healtheligibility.

IOM REPORT ON PTSD RELEASED

Military service in a war zone may have an increased chance of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), other anxiety disorders, and depression, according to *Gulf War and Health: Volume 6. Physiologic, Psychologic, and Psychosocial Effects of Deployment-Related Stress*, a report from the Institute of Medicine. Serving in a war also increases the chances of alcohol abuse, accidental death, and suicide within the first few years after leaving the war zone, and marital and family conflict, including domestic violence, said the committee that wrote the report. The new report was requested by the Department of Veterans Affairs, which asked for a comprehensive analysis of the scientific and medical evidence that connect deployment-related stress and long-term health problems, with a special focus on veterans of the 1991 Gulf War. The report documented a wide range of Gulf War stressors, including Scud missile and artillery attack; contact with enemy prisoners of war or dead animals; direct combat duty; seeing someone killed or wounded; worry about chemical weapon attacks; separation from family; sexual assault; having a combat related injury; and the length of deployment.



The report indicates that chronic pain; chronic fatigue syndrome; drug abuse; fibromyalgia; gastrointestinal symptoms; incarceration; skin diseases; and unexplained illnesses also may be associated with the stresses of being in a war, but the evidence to support these links is weaker. For other health problems and adverse effects reviewed, the scientific data are lacking or contradictory; the IOM committee could not decide if links between these ailments and deployment-related stress exist.

Although the report cannot offer definitive answers about the connections between many health problems and the stressors of war, it is clear that veterans who were deployed to war zones self-report more medical conditions and poorer health than veterans who were not deployed. Those who were deployed and have PTSD, in particular, tend to report more symptoms and poorer health, the committee found. PTSD often occurs together with other anxiety disorders, depression, and substance abuse; severity is associated with increased combat exposure.

A problem for obtaining better evidence that would give answers relates to pre- and post-deployment health screenings of physical, mental, and emotional status. The

Committee said that the Department of Defense (DoD) should conduct comprehensive, standardized evaluations of service members' medical conditions, psychiatric symptoms and diagnoses, and psychosocial status and trauma history before and after they deploy to war zones. Such screenings would provide baseline data for comparisons and information to determine the long-term consequences of deployment-related stress. In addition, screenings would help identify at-risk personnel who might benefit from targeted intervention programs during

deployment — such as marital counseling or therapy for psychiatric or other disorders — and help DoD and VA choose which intervention programs to implement for veterans adjusting to post-deployment life.

Copies of *Gulf War and Health, Volume 6: Physiologic, Psychologic, and Psychosocial Effects of Deployment-Related Stress* are available from the National Academies Press at **202-334-3313** or **1-800-624-6242** or online at www.nap.edu.

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU; How the VA Picks Up on Hidden Conditions

HARRIET KATZ ZEINER, PhD, Clinical Neuropsychologist, Neuropsychological Assessment Clinic, Palo Alto VA Healthcare System

If you come into VA for any reason, to get your blood pressure checked, to get new eyeglasses, or have a sprained ankle looked at, you are going to be asked some unusual questions. "Unusual," in the sense that they are not about what you came to VA to have checked. What are these unusual questions?

- During your military deployment, did you have any injuries from a fall, a blast or a vehicle crash?
- Did you ever feel dazed, or confused, or "see stars"?
- Have you had any nightmares about your deployment time?
- Are you easily startled, or watchful, or guarded?

If the answer is "yes" to any of these, then your doctor will schedule you for a screening for either brain injury or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

So what are these conditions? They are potentially common occurrences for people who have been in combat zones. It may surprise you to know that someone could have a mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) or PTSD, and not know it. You would notice the symptoms, even if you didn't know what caused it. You might notice the effects on your social life, your work or at school. Or, a family member may notice the symptoms and tell you that you seem "different."

What are the symptoms related to a head injury, and how did they happen? Well, if you fell, were hit in head or were exposed to (that is, you were close to or near) a blast in the form of a bomb, an improvised explosive device (IED), a Rocket-Propelled Grenade (RPG), a land mine, a grenade – any explosive device – then you might have suffered a brain injury, but not be aware of it. That is because there are invisible pressure waves, energy waves that move through the body, through body armor, clothing, and have the potential to cause little tears or tiny bubbles in soft tissue, like brain tissue.

What you would be aware of is that you might have come back from deployment with any of the following:

- Headaches
- Irritability
- Feeling on guard constantly
- Dizziness
- Sleep problems
- Having nightmares
- Memory problems
- Feeling numb
- Startling easily
- Balance problems
- Ringing in the ears

Some of these could be the result of a head injury. Or, they could be the result of unusual and sometimes horrific experiences that happen to people in war, such as seeing others killed or hurt, being exposed to constant bombardment, or living in a state of constant vigilance. That's what PTSD is – beyond-the-normal-range-of-experiences that keep a person in a state of constant readiness to survive if they are in a life threatening situation. But sometimes the state of readiness does not turn off. And being constantly on guard to protect yourself and your loved ones from harm is draining when there is no threat. PTSD is being ready to protect yourself on the battlefield- when in fact you are at the mall, or the dining room table with your family.

The symptoms of both mild brain injury and PTSD can seem the same, they cannot be separated out as to which is which except by a longer examination by a psychologist.

So, if you have any of these symptoms, why should you care which they are, TBI or PTSD? Well, you should care, because both mild TBI and PTSD are treatable, but the treatments are different.

Neither you, nor members of your family who see you in distress, have to continue suffering from these symptoms. They are treatable, and the effects of these acquired injuries can be reduced. If you have not come in to VA and been asked the "unusual" questions, but you think you might answer "yes" to any of them, contact your local VA facility by calling 1-800- 827- 1000 or by contacting the Polytrauma Call Center at 1-888 -827- 4824 and help will be on the way. Additional information is available www.polytrauma.va.gov/.

VA NEEDS MORE VOLUNTEER DRIVERS



Help Wanted: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has immediate openings for volunteer drivers to transport veterans to medical appointments. Successful candidates must pass a medical exam, have a valid driver's license, a safe driving record, and carry current auto insurance. Full and part-time volunteer positions available at VA medical centers nationwide. Schedule: Monday through Friday. Hours: Flexible. Benefits: the satisfaction of helping the Nation's veterans in need.

This longtime program, a collaborative effort between VA and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) that offers transportation to veterans in need, is now trying to deal with an aging driver population. The VA Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN) is looking for additional volunteer drivers to sustain its program of providing free rides to veterans needing transportation to their medical appointments at VA medical centers and clinics. Although there are 9,059 volunteer drivers, the program faces an aging driver population and must recruit younger volunteers to continue this service.

The program has been around since 1987, when Congress reduced funding for VA's Beneficiary Travel program. The DAV decided to initiate a nationwide volunteer-based transportation network, in concert with VA's Voluntary Service Office, to provide transportation to eligible veterans. Had the DAV not taken on the mission of providing this service, many veterans probably would have forgone the medical care they are entitled to receive. The veterans who use the VTN service are typically too ill to drive themselves, do not have family members available to drive them to their appointments, or have no other means of transportation.

VA establishes policy for volunteer participation in the program. Those interested in becoming volunteer drivers must complete a VA volunteer application, and pass a physical examination and health screening administered at a VA medical center. Once determined to be physically fit to safely transport passengers, volunteers must provide proof of a safe driving record, a valid driver's license, current motor vehicle insurance, or personal insurance, and be willing to participate in all related training provided by VA.

This program has been successful thanks to the selflessness of veteran volunteers, who are willing to give some of their time to serve veterans.

Interested in becoming a volunteer driver? Contact the Voluntary Service department at your nearest VA medical center, or visit the VA Voluntary Service Web site at www.va.gov/volunteer.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID'S OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Federal Student Aid's Office of the Ombudsman's focus has been on getting materials to our veterans interested in going to college. However, it's just as important to provide them with information around what to do if they are having problems with their student loans. Attached is a brochure from the Ombudsman's office, explaining how they can assist with student loan issues.

Please complete an online assistance request through www.ombudsman.ed.gov if you are having issues with your student loans.

This is the most efficient way to request help. The online form creates a case and ensures that the file is assigned to a case specialist quickly. You can also request assistance and information by calling **1-877-557-2575**.

FAFSA Facts

(This information is provided by the Department of Education)

Why Fill out a FAFSA?

The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the first step in the financial aid process. Use it to apply for Federal student aid, such as Pell Grants, student loans, and Federal work-study. In addition, most states and schools use FAFSA information to award their financial aid. For instructions on how to complete the FAFSA online or on paper, go to Completing the FAFSA at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov/complefafsa.

Application Deadlines

It is important to note the type of deadline you are up against. Ask your school about their definition of an application deadline, whether it is the receipt date and time or the process date and time of the application.

The Department of Education considers an application's receipt date and time to be when the application or correction has been successfully submitted. The last page of the online process is therefore called the confirmation page. It displays a confirmation number that contains the exact date and time (Central Standard Time) the form was received. It is recommended you print this for your records.

State and School Deadlines

The deadlines for your state or schools may be different from the Federal deadlines, and you may be required to complete additional forms.

State Student Financial Aid Deadlines:
www.fafsa.ed.gov/state_deadlines

School Student Financial Aid Deadlines:
www.fafsa.ed.gov/college_deadlines

Federal Deadlines

Federal Student Aid Deadlines: www.fafsa.ed.gov/federal_aid
For 2008–09 deadlines, consult the Web site listed above.

For additional information, please go to
www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov
or call **1-800-4-FED-AID**.

WHAT'S NEW?

The *Review* continues its newest feature, “What’s New?,” highlighting programs, benefits, and services provided by VA and other agencies. Information from previous issues is provided for reference due to the interest voiced by readers.

One-Stop Career Centers

Veterans can find the services they need at a convenient One-Stop Career Center. Work with a Veterans’ Employment Specialist to find jobs, acquire skills and education, plan your career, attend workshops, and take advantage of other resources. Information for the One-Stop Career Center near you is available on the Internet at www.hirevetsfirst.gov/onestop_vet.asp or by telephone toll free at **1-877-US2-JOBS (1-877-872-5627)**.

Transition Assistance Program for Veterans (TAP)

The Department of Labor’s TAP Web site provides career information for active duty service members, National Guard, Reserves, and spouses of service members separating or retiring from the military.

The Web site provides tools and information to use during transition from military life to civilian life. Those interested in more information may visit the Web site at www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/main.htm.

HireVetsFirst: Department of Labor’s (DOL) Transition Program

Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) is the DOL agency responsible for helping veterans make the transition from the military to good civilian jobs and for protecting their employment rights and benefits. Facts regarding current programs maybe obtained at the DOL Web site at www.dol.gov/vets/programs/fact/Employment_Services_fs01.htm.

Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Patriot Express Loans

Patriot Express is open to veterans, Reservists and National Guard members, current spouses of eligible personnel, the surviving spouses of service members who die on active duty, or spouses of veterans who die from a service-connected disability.

More information about the SBA program is available at www.sba.gov/patriotexpress or contact the SBA Answer

Desk **1-800-U-ASK-SBA (1-800-827-5722)**. Email may be sent to: answerdesk@sba.gov.

VA Home Loan Guaranty

A VA-guaranteed home loan offers a number of safeguards and advantages. For example, the interest rate is competitive with conventional rates with little or no down payment required. VA-guaranteed loans are made by private lenders, such as banks, savings and loan associations, and mortgage companies, but guaranteed by VA. As with any loan, you must apply directly to the lender. Your real estate broker can assist you in finding a lender.

You can apply by requesting your lender to obtain a certificate for you through VA’s secure Web site. For more information, including eligibility requirements, go to www.homeloans.va.gov or toll free at **1-888-244-6711**.

Education Benefits for Returning Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Veterans

Requests for education benefits from OEF/OIF veterans are receiving priority review and processing at VA in order to expedite opportunities to this deserving group. VA’s Education Service administers education programs that provide benefits to qualified veterans, service members, Reservists and dependents.

Information about educational programs and the applications process is available on the Internet at www.gibill.va.gov or by calling **1-888-GIBILL1**.

Current programs include:

- **Montgomery GI Bill - Active Duty (MGIB-AD)**
- **Montgomery GI Bill - Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR)**
- **Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)**
- **Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance Program (DEA)**
- **Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)**

HOW TO APPLY FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION FROM VA

Like other veterans, Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) War veterans with service-connected illnesses or injuries are eligible for monthly payments, called disability compensation. The disability must have been incurred or aggravated during active military service. Furthermore, the military service of the veteran must have been terminated through separation or discharge under conditions that were other than dishonorable.

Disability compensation varies according to the degree of disability and the number of dependents. Benefits are not subject to Federal or state income tax. Receipt of military

retirement pay, disability severance pay, and separation incentive payments, known as Special Separation Benefits (SSB) and Voluntary Separation Incentives (VSI), also affects the amount of VA compensation paid.

Disability ratings range from 0 to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). For example, in 2008, a veteran with a disability rating of 10 percent receives \$117 per month; a veteran with disability rating of 50 percent gets \$728 per month; and a veteran with no dependents who is totally disabled and evaluated at 100 percent receives \$2,527 monthly.

Veterans with disability ratings between 30 and 100 percent also are eligible for monthly allowances for each dependent. (The amount depends on the disability rating).

A veteran who is in need of regular aid and attendance of another person (including the veteran’s spouse), or who is permanently housebound may be entitled to additional benefits. VA must make that determination before the veteran can get these benefits.

Must Apply To Be Considered

Veterans must apply separately for disability compensation. It is not provided automatically; nor does participation in a health registry substitute for filing a claim. VA veterans service representatives (VSR) can provide the necessary application and assist veterans who need help in completing it. VSRs are located at all VA Regional Offices and in most VA medical centers.

For help in locating a VSR near you, call the following toll-free telephone number: **1-800-827-1000**.

New Disability Compensation Rates for 2008

| Percent Disabled | No Dependents | Veteran & Spouse |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 10% | \$117 | ----- |
| 20% | \$230 | ----- |
| 30% | \$356 | \$398 |
| 40% | \$512 | \$568 |
| 50% | \$728 | \$799 |
| 60% | \$921 | \$1,006 |
| 70% | \$1,161 | \$1,260 |
| 80% | \$1,349 | \$1,462 |
| 90% | \$1,517 | \$1,644 |
| 100% | \$2,527 | \$2,669 |

Effective 12/1/2007.

www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/rates/comp01.htm#BM01

Other Benefits

In addition to the compensation program described above, individual veterans may be eligible for the full range of other benefits offered by VA, including education and training, vocational rehabilitation, home loan guarantees, life insurance, pension, burial benefits, and more.

To learn more about VA’s programs, OEF/OIF veterans and other interested parties can visit the VA home page www.va.gov or call **1-800-827-1000**.

For additional information on other benefits programs, please check online at www.vba.va.gov/benefit_facts/index.htm.

ABOUT THE OEF/OIF/GWOT REVIEW

Welcome to the ninth issue of the “**OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM/IRAQI FREEDOM REVIEW**” newsletter. Earlier issues are dated December 2003, June 2004, February 2005, September 2005, February 2006, April 2007, July 2007, and October 2007. VA’s Environmental Agents Service (EAS) publishes the “*Review*” to provide information about the concerns of combat veterans, specifically the Global War on Terror Heroes, who served in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom (primarily in Iraq), their families, and others interested in possible long-term health consequences of military service in Southwest Asia. The “*Review*” describes actions by VA and others to respond to these concerns. For past and current issues of the “*Review*” and additional information, see our Web site at www.va.gov/EnvironAgents.

Beginning with Volume 4, Number 1 of the *Review*, audio files of news “pod casts” items will be available at our Web site at www.va.gov/EnvironAgents; click on “**Operation OEF/OIF**.”

We encourage your comments or questions concerning the content of the “*Review*.” Please send suggestions and ideas for future issues of the newsletter to: Environmental Agents Service (131), VA Central Office, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420.

Requests for additional copies of this or future issues also should be sent to the above address. A limited supply of the prior issues is available. Please specify the quantity and issue date requested.

WHERE TO GET HELP AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Due to a high volume of requests, this information has been updated and repeated from earlier editions of the Review).

Active duty military personnel with questions or concerns about service in Southwest Asia (including Operations Desert Storm, Desert Shield, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom) - contact your commanding officer or call the **Department of Defense (DoD) Deployment Health Clinical Center (1-800-796-9699)** for information. DoD also offers the **“Direct Veterans Hotline,”** with the toll-free number **1-800-497-6261**.

OEF and OIF veterans with concerns about their health should contact their nearest VA medical center. The telephone number can be found in your local telephone directory under Department of Veterans Affairs in the “U.S. Government” listings. Medical care is available, and a Gulf War Registry examination for OEF and OIF veterans is also available on request.

OEF and OIF veterans in need of **marital/family counseling** should contact the nearest VA medical center or VA Vet Center, also listed in your phonebook under Department of Veterans Affairs in the “U.S. Government” listings. For additional information about these programs, call **1-800-749-8387**. The Vet Centers welcome home and honor war veterans by providing quality readjustment services in a caring manner and by assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in their communities.

OEF and OIF veterans seeking disability compensation for illnesses incurred in or aggravated by military service can contact a Veterans Benefits Counselor at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility at **1-800-827-1000**. You can also start a claim online at **www.va.gov**.

(Continued on page 8)

ADDRESS CHANGES

If this newsletter has your old address, please use this form to update our mailing list. Send the completed form to:

OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM/ IRAQI FREEDOM “GWOT” REVIEW

Corporate Franchise Data Center
Austin Campus (200/397A)
1615 Woodward Street
Austin, TX 78772-0001.

If you have access to the **OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM/IRAQI FREEDOM REVIEW** via the VA Web site **www.va.gov/EnvironAgents** and wish to discontinue receiving a copy by mail, please complete the form provided and return it to the Austin Automation Center. If you are receiving more than one copy of the newsletter, please let us know. Write to the address above. Please provide your name, address, and last four digits of your Social Security number. You may use this or other paper. Please indicate what publication that you are receiving. *Thank you.*

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| Subscription or address change form for OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM/IRAQI FREEDOM GWOT REVIEW Newsletter – <i>Please print</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| Name: | | | First | Middle | Last | Last 4 SSN | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Address: Street (Please indicate which APO/FPO if applicable) | | | | | City | State | Zip Code | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| New Address: Street or P.O. Box | | | | | City | State | Zip Code | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My address has changed, and I would like to continue to receive the newsletter. | <input type="checkbox"/> I am receiving more than one copy, but I only want to get a single copy. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't need to get the newsletter by mail as I can read it at www.va.gov/EnvironAgents . | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain) | | | | | | |
| | | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> | | | | | | |

(Where to Get Help and Additional Information, from Page 7)

OEF and OIF Veterans interested in learning additional information about the wide range of benefit programs administered by VA should contact a Veterans Benefits Counselor at the nearest VA regional office or health care facility at **1-800- 827-1000**, or visit **www.vba.va.gov**.

Representatives of veterans service organizations, like the American Legion (**1-800-433-3318**), Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (**1-800-VFW-1899**), and Disabled American Veterans (**1-877-426-2838**), are very helpful to veterans seeking disability compensation. *(These organizations are cited as examples. There are many other excellent organizations. VA does not endorse or recommend any one group over another.)*

County Veterans Service Officers also can be of great help to many military veterans seeking benefits they earned through their service to the Nation.

For additional **Federal benefit** information, see VA's *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents* booklet. It is updated annually to reflect changes in law and policies. It is available for purchase from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402, Web site: **<http://bookstore.gpo.gov/actions/GetPublication.do?stocknumber=051-000-00233-4>**. VA's World Wide Web pages are updated throughout the year to present the most current information. The VA home page (**www.VA.gov**) contains links to selections on compensation and pension benefits, health care benefits and services, burial and memorial benefits, and more.

**OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM/
IRAQI FREEDOM REVIEW**

*Information for Veterans Who
Served in Iraq and Afghanistan
and Their Families*

June 2008

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for private use \$300

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**
Central Office (131)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

