**Veterans Studies Interest Group Listserv**  
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This month’s Listserv includes a new VA report on veterans’ suicide, a Congressional Medal of honor ceremony, an informative battlefield discovery and video recordings from the Veteran’s History Project.

**New Report on Suicides in Veterans**

Suicide rate in younger veterans has jumped to a new high according to a new VA report issued on September 26. In addition, the suicide rate among women continues to be higher than in men. The new numbers are from an update of the VA’s comprehensive suicide report released two years ago and summarized in a previous Listserv [here](#). About 20 veterans per day take their own lives accounting for 14% of all adult suicide deaths in the U.S. even though veterans are only 8% of the US population.

![Figure 6: Veteran Suicide Rate by Age Group, 2016](image)

The above bar graph shows that the highest suicide rate is in the youngest veterans’ group ages 18-34 years. In the curve below, the trend of veteran suicides shows a substantial uptick to a new high in the 18-34-year age group but not the others. To say it another way, one survey done by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America last fall found that half of their members knew a post-9/11 service member who has committed suicide. At the same time, suicide rate in older veterans has changed little and remains at a high level.
The suicide rate for female veterans was 1.8 times greater than for non-veteran women. Firearms accounted for 69.4% of suicides in veterans (males, 70.6%; females, 41.2%) as against 48.4% in others.

VA’s programs to help prevent suicide include the Veterans Crisis Line, REACH VET, a predictive analytics program to identify veterans at risk for suicide in partnership with the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security and programs to support veterans transition from military to civilian life. VA has local programs as well. But in spite of these efforts, the most distressing problem of veteran suicide remains.

**Medal of Honor Upgrade**

Ten years ago, former Staff Sgt. and Medic Ronald Shurer II received a Silver Star for his actions as a Medic with the third special forces group in Afghanistan. His detachment was on a mission to capture a high-value insurgent in a mountain side compound at the battle of Shok Valley in Afghanistan. The detachment was spotted and there was a 6-hour firefight during which Medic Shurer managed to triage and save more than a dozen of his teammates and their Afghan partners.

Shurer, who was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer last year, is now a Secret Service agent guarding the President. On September 3, he was told that he was going to meet the President for some work-related discussion, but it turned out that he received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism in the Shok Valley. According to Pres. Trump “Not a single American died in that brutal battle, thanks in great measure to Ron’s heroic actions.” A video of the presentation is [here](#).

Shurer came from a military family (both parents were in the Air Force, his grandfather was a World War II and great-grandfather a World War I veteran) and signed up after 9/11 while he was a student at Washington State University. He is now the third living soldier to receive the Medal of Honor in the past two years. DoD has been re-examining 1300 valor awards made since 9/11 to determine if they merit higher recognition.
Civil War Bones Tell a Story
Archaeologists made a rare discovery on the Manassas battlefield in Northern Virginia. Two Union soldiers were buried with their severed arms and legs. They had been wounded in the Civil War’s Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862. One soldier was buried with his severed leg and a bullet that came from an imported British Enfield rifle musket, a favorite of Confederates. Anthropologists surmised that the bullet struck the soldier while he was fleeing, hit his cartridge box first and went ultimately to the thigh bone beneath the hip. The other buried Union soldier had a large ball that smashed upper right arm and smaller ones in the groin and near the right shin.

Archaeologist Brandon S. Bies called it a most rare finding and for him “an emotional experience.” It is rare to get such a close and personal experience from battlefield events 150 years earlier.

In amputating a leg during the Civil War, the surgeon would stand on the wounded man’s right side and the uninjured leg would be tied to the operating table. The soldier would be put to sleep with chloroform or ether and aides holding his Hands. Scalpels used to cut through tissue would ultimately progress to a bone saw in an operation that took 10 minutes or less for a competent surgeon. The limbs were discarded on the field, all in what seems a grisly process but one that saved lives. The Civil War was the beginning for many surgical and triage techniques. The Second Battle of Bull Run saw 1700 Union and 1200 Confederate soldiers killed and more than 14,000 wounded. Its two newly discovered soldiers will be buried at Arlington Cemetery.

Veterans History Project
The Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center “collects, preserves and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war” It was authorized by legislation enacted in 2000.

Some examples: Max Cleland, an American war hero lost both legs and right arm to a grenade explosion in Vietnam. He tells about his experience of pain, depression and frustration. He would later become the youngest administrator of the Veterans Administrations, as it was then called, and a Georgia Senator who played a role in establishing the program. In another interview, Nathaniel Riley talks about learning the rules of a German POW camp in World War II.

The Veteran’s Creed
1. I am an American Veteran
2. I proudly served my country
3. I live the values I learned in the military
4. I continue to serve my community, my country and my fellow veterans
5. I maintain my physical and mental discipline
6. I continue to lead and improve
7. I make a difference
8. I honor and remember my fallen comrades
The Listserv is available as an archive on the Georgetown University Library website under the title “Veterans Interest Newsletters”.

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Stats Section

Veteran population by State

Veteran population by state ages under 25 years
Veteran population by state ages 65 years and older
From the VA National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics