

Veterans Studies Interest Group Listserv

Issue #56 March/April 2022

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***

Note: The listserv is now bimonthly.

This edition of the Listserv includes AVF Monograph; Secretary McDonough's Report; Doolittle Raid's 80th Anniversary; "I Just Can't Stand By"; VHA Native American Committee Formed; Pension Building; Vets Unemployment

AVF Monograph

As indicated in [Listserv# 54](#), over six weeks in April and May 2021, Georgetown University convened a unique workshop of high-level individuals to discuss the topic "Supporting Veterans After 20 Years of the All-Volunteer Force and 50 Years of War: Ideas Moving Forward." Led by GEN George W. Casey Jr (Ret.), 36th Army Chief of Staff and me, the participants came from the public and private sectors, academia, media, and veterans' organizations.

They included former VA Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries and Undersecretaries. Congresspersons; former National Guard leadership; directors of major veterans' organizations; several officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs; media; and Academia. Out of this workshop, we are preparing a monograph describing the event. The rollout for the monograph will be in late June.

Secretary McDonough's Report

As part of the process mandated by the VA-MISSION Act of 2018, VA Secretary Denis McDonough released a sweeping plan to both close hospitals and clinics and construct new ones. This report will then be considered by an Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission which is appointed by the president and congressionally approved. The Commission will conduct public hearings and send a report to the president to include an evaluation of the VA report and the commission's recommendations, all due by January 31, [2023](#).

In previewing the plan, Secretary McDonough said the shifts in VA infrastructure would meet "the needs of 21st century veterans, not the needs of a health care system built 80 years ago." He called the proposals "an investment in VA and not a retreat" and said that 150,000 more veterans would have better access to primary care and 370,000 to

specialty care and they have now. He strongly resisted the comparison to the Base Realignment and Closure process by which many military bases were closed in the 1990s and pointed to many investments that are being made to realign and modernize the VA in his [plan](#)

The plan will be the first major change in a system where almost 70% of health care facilities were built over 50 years ago and healthcare buildings have a median age of 60 years compared to 8 1/2 years in the private [sector](#).

Veterans are moving from the Northeast and parts of the Midwest to the South and Southwest and locating in rural rather than urban areas. In addition, though the number of veterans will be declining, for some time veterans will also be in older age groups. This will necessitate different types of facilities, in particular long-term support. Then, in the next decade, the average age will begin to decline again. Another important demographic aspect is a higher proportion of women which will necessitate gender specific care.

Still another factor is the Veterans Community Care Program where, under certain circumstances, veterans can receive care outside the VA at VA's expense. The involvement of the private sector also has to be factored into the approach though the data are incomplete.

The report recommends closure of many outpatient clinics to be replaced by clinics offering specialty care, nursing homes and residential facilities specializing in substance abuse. Hospital closures are planned for Brooklyn NY, Northampton MA and Chillicothe [OH](#). Specific numbers are shown in the tables [below](#).

The report has elicited a response from legislators and others in areas where hospitals and clinics will close or shrink, including Montana (home of the chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs committee.) and [Massachusetts](#). The American Federation of Government Employees strongly denounced the [plan](#). Certain veterans' organizations have resisted the report while others are open to change.

VA Asset and Infrastructure Plan Numbers

TYPE	CURRENT	FUTURE	CHANGE ▼
Multi-specialty community-based outpatient clinic	248	388	140
Inpatient partnership	7	55	48
Standalone community living center	2	29	27
Health-care center	16	30	14
Outpatient partnership	0	14	14
Standalone residential rehabilitation treatment program	10	22	12
VA Medical Center	171	168	-3
Community-based outpatient clinic	555	469	-86
Other outpatient services clinic	255	169	-86

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Tables showing VA's asset and infrastructure plan numbers as reported by the Washington [Post](#).

Doolittle Raid's 80th Anniversary

April 18 was the 80th anniversary of the Doolittle raid in World War II (see also Listserv [#30](#)). This was a direct raid on Tokyo, led by then Lt. Col (later Lt GEN) Jimmy Doolittle as payback for Pearl Harbor and it was fraught with difficulty. Sixteen B25 bombers took off from the aircraft carrier USS Hornet where heavy bombers performing this feat had never been done before. Pilots had to start the raid from far off in the Pacific because the Japanese had found out about the [strategy](#). Pilots and crews were told that their mission was to bomb Tokyo only two days before the planes took off. After the bombing, the plan was to make it to China and safety, which many of the crews were able to do with help from Chinese locals and missionaries. Four planes crashed, 11 crew had to bail out and three Raiders died. Of eight that were captured, three were executed and one died of [starvation](#). As the son of a flight navigator on the mission said "There was nothing that they could be asked to do for their country that they wouldn't do. This is who these men [were](#)"

The raid gave a substantial morale boost to the homeland. It is doubtful that many Americans remember this raid now though it was celebrated in "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo" and 2 other movies. The last Doolittle Raider, retired Lt Colonel Richard Cole died in 2019 at age [103](#).

"I Just Can't Stand By"

Despite official warnings from both the American and Russian governments, groups of veterans are signing up to fight in the Ukraine. They see it as a righteous fight against a despotic aggressor. As one veteran put it "Sanctions can help, but the sanctions can't help right now, and people need help right now. I can help right [now](#)." Veterans are also signing up to give humanitarian assistance.

The country's charismatic President Volodymyr Zelensky has announced the creation of an "international legion" of volunteers from around the world to help fight against Russia. Across the United States, small groups of military veterans are planning and obtaining passports, and are hungry for a righteous fight. According to former army officer David Ribardo "it's a conflict that has a clear good and bad side, and maybe that stands apart from other recent conflicts. A lot of us are watching what is happening and just want to grab a rifle and go over [there](#)"

Many veterans went on social media to join the fight in groups such as Volunteers for [Ukraine](#). President Zelensky said that, as of March, about 16,000 volunteers joined his international [brigade](#).

On the other hand, the volunteers have received warnings and discouragement from all sides. There were warnings that the war might escalate and put these veterans in a terrible position. A Russian defense ministry spokesman said the volunteers would be considered mercenaries and not soldiers and would not be protected under

humanitarian rules regarding the treatment of [POWs](#). U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken pointed to humanitarian assistance rather than joining the [fight](#) and Pentagon spokesman John Kirby has said that it is better to donate to agencies responding to the humanitarian crisis. “We do not believe that Ukraine is a safe place for Americans to go. We urge them not to go. And if there are any still there, we urge them to [leave](#)”

American volunteers in this war follow a long tradition that includes volunteering for Pancho Villa in Mexico, the Spanish civil war in the 1930s, the Israeli war for independence in the late 1940s and recent campaigns against the Islamic state and Iraq and Syria. As long as they do not take up arms for a violent group that opposes the U.S. government, there are few [restrictions](#). In this war there are many dangers including capture with mistreatment and becoming a propaganda tool for the Russians.

VA Native American Committee Formed

The VA has established an Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs to advise on Native American matters. It is one of 27 such advisory committees and will consist of 15 Native American veterans chaired by Jack Austin, an Army veteran and Assistant Chief of the Choctaw [Nation](#). According to Secretary McDonough “The work of this committee will be essential in helping us to find and to develop better and more innovative ways to serve native veterans, their families, caregivers and [survivors](#).”

Native Americans have a long and very proud history within U.S. military starting with the Revolutionary War. In 2019, they comprised 0.8% of [veterans](#) and, since 9/11, Native Americans have the highest proportion of their population serving in the military of any group - 19% compared to 14% of all other [ethnicities](#). Nearly 20% of Native American servicemembers are women, also more than any other [group](#). There are 573 federally recognized [tribes](#), with their own cultures, traditions, belief systems and stances on war. Although military service is consistent among many of these tribes, this spectrum necessitates cultural sensitivity. Noteworthy are Native American reintegration ceremonies following battle with some traditions that span many years and vary [among tribes](#).

The Native American code [talkers](#) of World War I (mostly Choctaw) and World War II (mostly Navajo) have been celebrated [in books](#) and [movies](#). Utilizing their own native and unwritten language as codes, they befuddled the Germans in World War I and both the Germans and Japanese in World War II. All in all, Native Americans from about 33 tribes [participated](#). Ironically, the federal government had discouraged the speaking of these Native American tongues for many years. Besides this valuable service, Native Americans have distinguished themselves in battle in many ways and 27 of them have been awarded the Medal of [Honor](#). In November 2020, the National Native American Veterans Memorial opened on the grounds of the National Museum of the American [Indian](#) (see Listserv [#48](#)).

Native Americans have particular challenges in accessing VA service benefits and more generally in access to education, employment and health care since many live in remote, rural communities and reservations with limited internet [connectivity](#). These barriers are enhanced by a hesitance to use VA programs because of a perceived lack of cultural

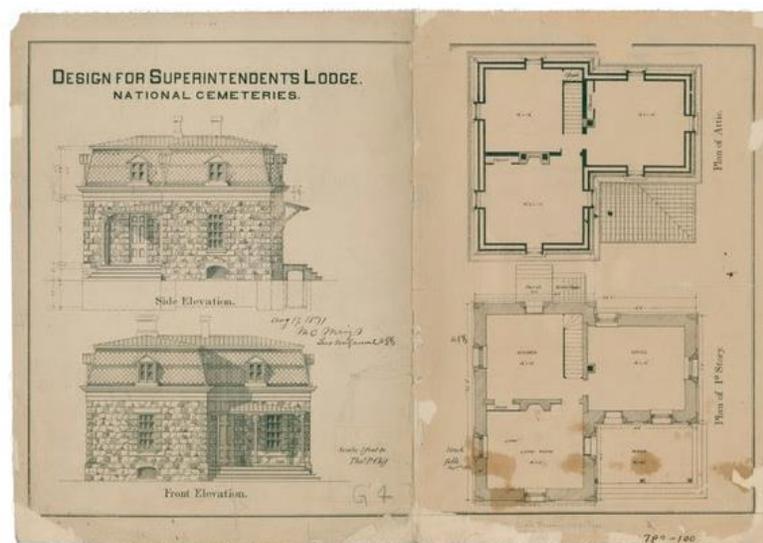
competence and mistrust of the federal [government](#). This new committee will address these and other Native American issues.

Pension Building

The VA History [Office](#) has undertaken a project entitled “History of the VA in 100 Objects.” One of these objects is the Pension Bureau Building.

With new benefits that veterans received after the Civil War came a necessity for more people (bureaucracy) to work on them and space for them to work. So, in 1882 the Pension Bureau hired 770 new clerks (doubling its workforce) and began the construction of a headquarters. General Montgomery C. Meigs, a renowned architect and quartermaster general of the army, who had designed the Dome of U.S. capitol and the 12-mile-long Washington aqueduct, was given the job of designing the building. located on 4th and F St in northwest Washington. The building fills a full city block and was inspired by Italian renaissance architecture, especially that of the 16th century Roman palazzo. With a cost of about \$900,000, an estimated 15 million red bricks went into the construction.

Among the innovations of this building were elevated rails built to move paperwork, stairways with extra wide treads and shallow risers to accommodate disabled veterans and an exterior *Terra Cotta* frieze depicting Union soldiers and sailors. The building is now the “National Building Museum” and it displays exhibits related to exploring and understanding the built environment. Its Great Hall is and has been the site of many lavish events.



Meigs Plan for the Pension Bureau Building. From [VA](#)



The Pension Building at the time of its completion in 1887. From [VA](#).

Vets unemployment

Unemployment rate for veterans dropped to 2.4%, its lowest rate since April 2019 and the first time it has been under 3% since the start of the pandemic in early [2020](#). The estimate is that this is roughly half the total jobless number of veterans from March 2021. It compares to the national unemployment rate of [3.8%](#). Veterans of Gulf War era II have an unemployment rate of 3% and those of the first Gulf War era, [1.4%](#) (their number has been below 2% for three of the last four [months](#)).

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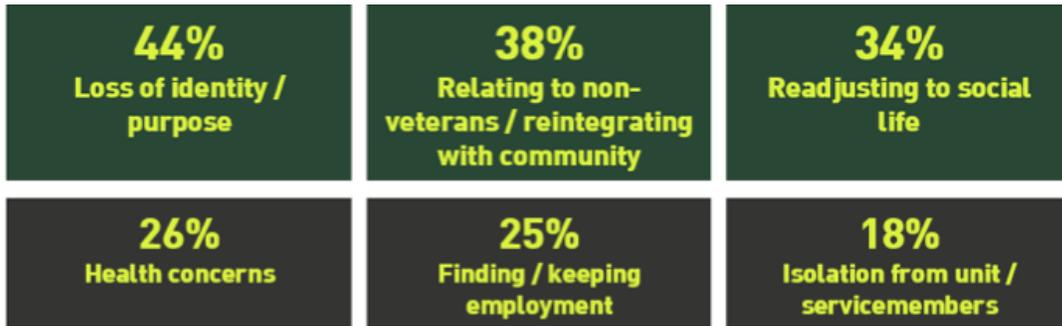
The Listserv is available as an archive on the Georgetown University Library website under the title “Veterans Interest [Newsletters](#)”

Stats Section

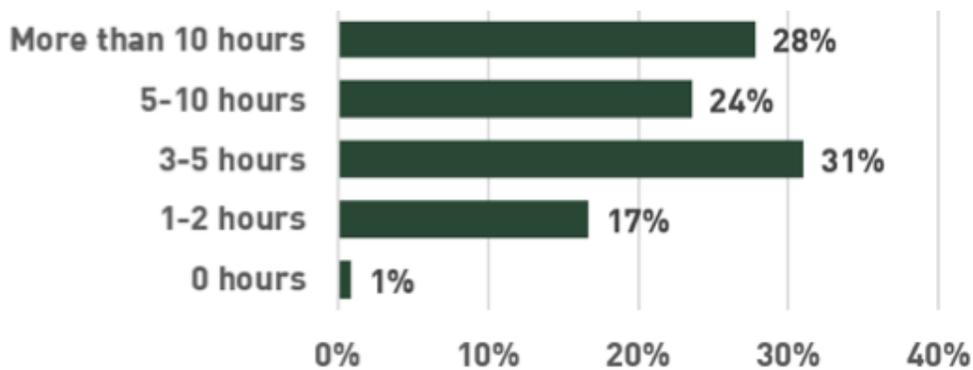
IAVA Survey Findings

The Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America recently released its annual [survey](#) and here are some results.

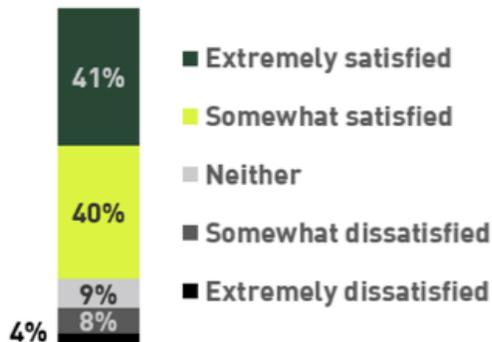
Biggest Challenges When Transitioning Out of the Military



Hours Spent Volunteering



Job Satisfaction



Why are you satisfied with your job?		
57% Compensation	54% Work-life balance	50% Environment and/or people
Why aren't you satisfied with your job?		
51% Job does not use my skills	50% Environment and/or people	41% Compensation

Suicide

Do you personally know a post-9/11 veteran who has attempted suicide?



Do you personally know a post-9/11 veteran who has died by suicide?

