

Every 65 Minutes a US Veteran Dies from Suicide

By [Iraq Veterans Against the War](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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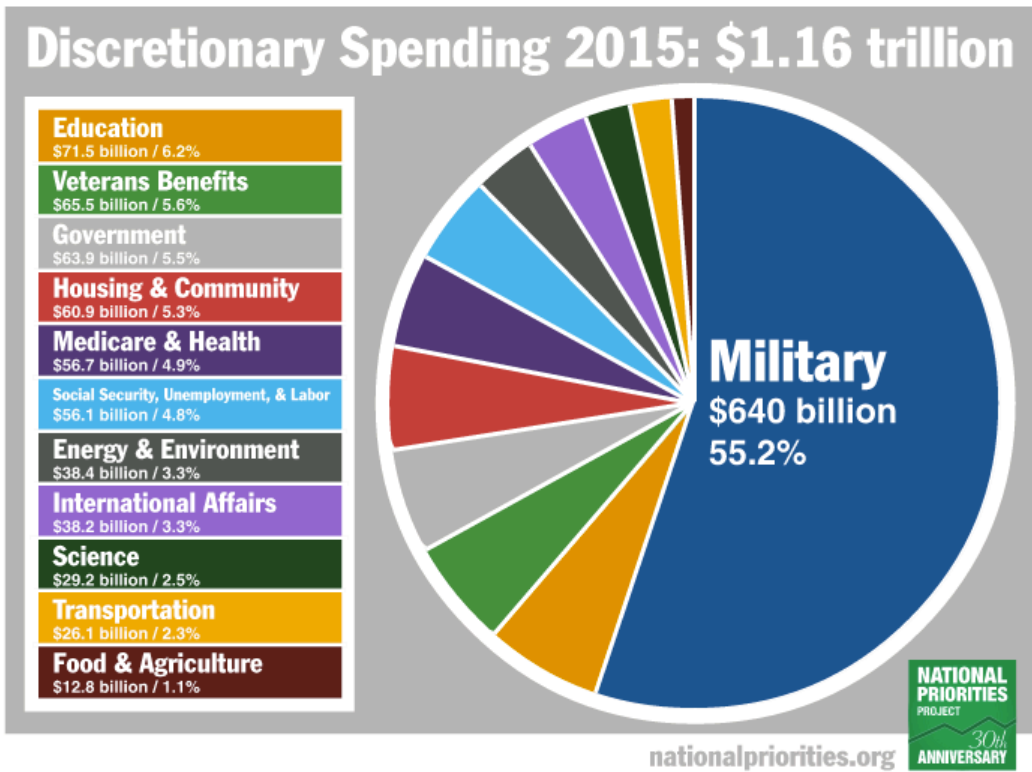
While many spend Veterans' Day remembering loved ones lost, from the perspective of a veteran, the holiday feels largely superficial. Cities across the nation are draped in yellow, thousands will march down the streets in parades, and people will talk a lot about a vague notion of "honor." Putting yellow ribbons on our wounds does not change the fact that every 65 minutes a veteran dies from suicide.

That's 22 per day, and in the past 2 months, 2 of those have been members of IVAW - my friends. It is impossible to ignore.

I have been a member of IVAW since 2008. At my first national IVAW gathering, I was astounded to meet so many veterans who shared my political perspectives as well as my experiences and struggles as a veteran. I gained a new family and the support system I most needed as I transitioned back into civilian life. As a single parent struggling to make ends meet, IVAW was critical to my survival.

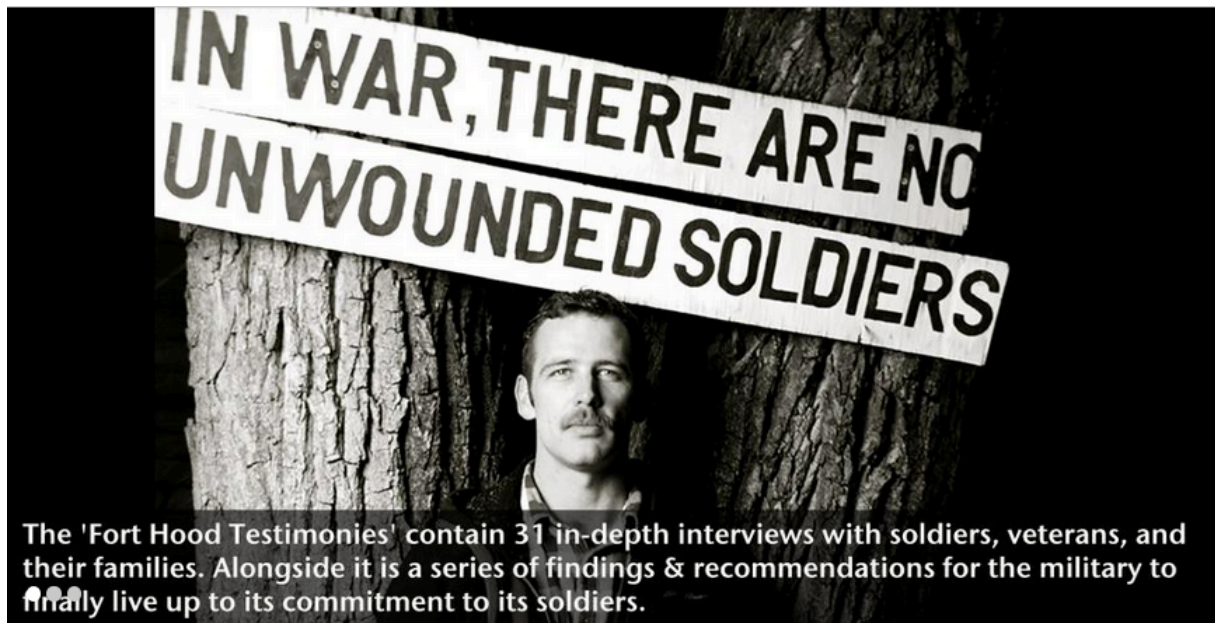
My story is not unique. Over the past 6 years, I have heard so many IVAW members express the way in which this community has literally saved their lives.

Unfortunately, we cannot save everyone, as we learned with sorrow this fall. Until this nation starts prioritizing healing as much or more as we prioritize militarism, this pattern will never be interrupted. In 2015, the government plans to spend about 55% of tax revenue on the military, while spending only about 5% on veterans.



In the meantime, 20-40% of veterans with multiple deployments suffer from symptoms of traumatic brain injury, 30-50% return with PTSD, and about 30% of women in the military experience sexual assault. Instead of increasing spending to help veterans heal from traumatic injury, the DoD is handing out bad conduct discharges (also known as “bad papers”) at an alarming rate for discrepancies that could have been solved with treatment, or that should have been processed as medical discharges.

Bad papers result in a loss of benefits, so that those who often need support the most have none. As a part of our Operation Recovery campaign, which lasted from 2010 - 2014, organizers from Iraq Veterans Against the War, Civilian Soldier Alliance, and Under the Hood interviewed hundreds of soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas. From these, they compiled a report that includes 31 testimonies from soldiers stationed at Fort Hood, findings, analysis, and recommendations.



The Fort Hood Report sheds light on harmful military practices that are disturbing enough to make the case to cease current practices immediately and create some serious transformative changes in US Military culture and the way that this nation cares for its veterans. It is sure to inform our work for years to come. Help us take off the yellow-ribbon bandaid and get the word out about what veterans are really experiencing. [Make a generous donation to IVAW today.](#)

It is also important to take time today to remember that US veterans are not the only people who are suffering because of these wars. Iraq is breaking down after sustaining constant warfare and sanctions from from the US beginning in 1990. A new US invasion is taking place while Iraqis continue to suffer from environmental pollutants, civil unrest, repression against organized labor, violence against women, and a variety of things that were either created or exacerbated by the US invasion of 2003.



In the summer of 2003, members of the Organization of Women's Freedom (OWFI, one of our partner organizations) in Iraq gathered signatures in several towns in Iraq in support of the Right to Heal Initiative. Photo courtesy of OWFI.

I am proud to work for an organization that values the self-determination, healing, and recovery of the people of Iraq just as much as it values those things for veterans. For over a year, IVAW has been working in coalition with 2 Iraqi civil society organizations to raise awareness about the human rights violations we have all experienced as a result of the war in Iraq, and to hold the US government to account.

When we bring together the voices of US veterans and Iraqis who are working toward the same goals, the message is powerful: It's time for the US government to take responsibility for all of their harm.

[Help us amplify our voices by making a contribution to IVAW today.](#)

With all of the conflict in the world, it can be challenging to maintain hope. But the community that we have made for ourselves in IVAW helps us to continue to persevere. Thank you for being a part of building, nurturing, and growing that community, and thank you for thinking of us today.

With Gratitude,

Joyce Wagner
IVAW co-Director

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