



In Service to America

Vietnam Veterans of America

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A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

July 14, 2007

Dr. Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) strongly urges an immediate halt to the Department of Defense (DoD) practice of discharging American service personnel for “personality disorders,” pending a thorough investigation of the practice as described in the feature article in the April 9, 2007 issue of “The Nation” and the ABC News television program reports recently aired on Thursday evening, July 12, 2007.

According to these reports, the Pentagon is abusing the “personality disorder” diagnosis to kick soldiers out of the military and thereby cheat these wounded OIF/OEF soldiers and Marines out of a lifetime of medical care and disability compensation payments by claiming that these combat veterans were mentally ill *before* joining the military, when in fact, a review of their medical records by investigators found them to be suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI) and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In addition, the stories noted that several of these soldiers are being pursued by DoD for the return of re-enlistment bonuses. This suggests that the military fabricated the “personality disorder” diagnosis to separate these soldiers only because they had become a medical liability to DoD and/or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The use of bogus “personality disorder” diagnoses must stop now. VVA believes that all our OEF/OIF troops should undergo thorough medical exams before and after deployment - especially mental health screenings, and if necessary, they should then have prompt treatment without a “personality disorder” stigma from the military and/or the VA. In addition, VVA calls for a review of all “personality disorder” discharges issued to military personnel deployed since the initiation of the “Global War on Terrorism”.

If these reports are found to be true, it is a disgraceful chapter in this country’s treatment of its veterans. VVA stands behind our service members and our veterans to see that they are treated with respect and dignity and that they receive proper and ethical medical treatment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Rowan", written in a cursive style.

John Rowan
National President