

Time to Bring the Troops Home: More Veterans Committed Suicide Last Decade Than Died in Vietnam

image credit: The Free Thought Project

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March 10, 2020

It is no secret that the leading cause of death among active duty troops deployed to the Middle East is not combat or accidents, or IEDs – it's themselves. The Pentagon's own statistics show that this is a crisis but it is being ignored.

In 2019, according to the Department of Defense, [17 service members](#) were killed during hostile situations in Afghanistan. The number of soldiers who killed themselves was **nearly 19 times that amount**. The most recent numbers, coming from 2018, show that a total of 321 active-duty members took their lives during the year.

Not only are active duty soldiers tragically ending their own lives at an increasing rate, but once they finish their service, these numbers skyrocket. While the suicide rate for active duty members is certainly shocking, veterans kill themselves at a rate nearly 200 percent more.

The most recent data shows that a veteran kills himself or

herself in the United States [about every hour and 26 minutes](#). That is 6,100 veterans a year.

When we look at these numbers over the past ten years, the results are shocking: **more veterans have killed themselves in the last decade than service members who died in Vietnam.**

If we look at attempted suicides, that number skyrockets once more to 19,000 attempts, of which 6,100 result in ending their own lives.

One of these attempted suicides was Air Force veteran John Michael Watts, 58, who approached the Georgia Capitol in downtown Atlanta around 10:45 a.m. in 2018 and within minutes, he was engulfed in flames that **burned 90 percent of his body.**

Watts [set himself on fire](#) in an attempted suicide to raise awareness to the problems within the VA. Veterans attempting suicide at VA clinics has since been on the rise.

“VA is working to prevent suicide among all veterans, whether they are enrolled in VA health care or not,” VA Secretary Robert Wilkie [said](#) in September. “That’s why the department has adopted a comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention, using bundled strategies that cut across various sectors – faith communities, employers, schools and health care organizations, for example – to reach veterans where they live and thrive.”

This problem is extremely concerning, but the establishment’s only answer as of yet is approving new and [controversial anti-depressants](#).

No one is looking at *why* veterans are killing themselves at a rate nearly double the national average. They are simply trying to put a band-aid on the problem which will never work.

War is the plight of mankind. It is perpetually waged by cowards too afraid to send themselves or their own children

into harm's way, but who do not hesitate to send the poor or 'patriotic.'

When the state is done with its pawns of empire, it disposes of them like spent military gear. They then become unable to get the proper care they need for illness and injury related to their service. If they try to self-medicate to cope with the subsequent PTSD from being forced to brutally occupy a foreign country, these veterans have their children taken, face life in prison, or worse.

The [Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates](#) that nearly 50,000 veterans are homeless on any given night. Another 140,000 are currently in jail, many of them for victimless crimes like drug possession for trying to treat their illness without pharmaceuticals.

As if the numbers aren't bad enough, veterans are often the target of unjust attention from law enforcement. On multiple occasions, the [Department of Homeland Security](#) has referred to veterans as potential terrorists and noted that they pose a threat to national security.

The Free Thought Project has reported on case after case of veterans returning home [only to be beaten and locked up for speaking out](#), or [killed by police during a PTSD-triggered episode](#).

Lip service of 'supporting the troops' is proving to be the worst possible thing for them.

If you really want to "support the troops" you'll stop supporting wars of aggression in distant lands in which Americans are forced to kill people who pose no threat to the US.

If you really "support the troops" you'll stop blindly standing up for your government whose proven track record shows that they do **everything but** support the troops.

It's time for Congress to act on behalf of all veterans and Americans to legalize marijuana across the nation, end foreign wars of aggression, and reboot the VA. Too many people are in jail and are being charged with felonies for a plant—one that has demonstrated the power to treat the pain and depression of war, addictions to the opioids dished out by the VA, and most importantly—to prevent suicide.