



## PTSD, by any other name, still haunts troops

By [MEGAN MCCLOSKEY](#)

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ARLINGTON, Va. \_ The title of HBO's new documentary, "Wartorn: 1861-2010," suggests a bit of a boring history lesson, but instead the unflinching look at PTSD reveals just how universal the struggles of today's servicemembers really are.

The sobering documentary, which will air on Veterans Day, opens with the story of a Civil War soldier who enlisted with stars and stripes in his eyes. His letters over the years grow less enthusiastic about the cause and more troubled by the daily death of comrades. He is eventually hospitalized and sent home, where he kills himself.

The soldier's problems were called "hysteria" and "melancholia," but the statements of his friends and family could have easily been made yesterday about an Iraq War veteran.

HBO premiered the documentary last night at the Pentagon to a room full of uniforms, including Adm. Mike Mullen and Gen. George Casey. Felt like a turning point that the military's top brass so fully embraced and supported an outsider's project on a topic they hardly even gave credence to at the start of the current wars.

"Wartorn" flips between veterans of past wars and those of the Iraq and Afghanistan era. It includes footage of battlefield interviews with WWII soldiers who had "shell shock," Vietnam and WWII veterans talking about the nightmares they still have to this day, and parents of servicemembers who did tours in Iraq and then took their own life.

Col. Charles Engel, who is director of the Army's Deployment Health Clinical Center and was interviewed in the documentary, said today that although it's hard for the military to see on screen, the dark film fairly portrays how far the military has to go in handling PTSD.

There is one wrenching scene where a father of a soldier who killed himself reads a doctor's notes dismissing his son's symptoms as imaginary and sending him back to the field.

James Gandolfini executive produced the documentary and sat down in Iraq with Gen. Ray Ordierno and at the Pentagon with Gen. Pete Chiarelli to talk about how the military deals with mentally struggling servicemembers. Gandolfini, best known for playing a ruthless mobster on "Sopranos" who ended up in therapy to sort out his feelings, is an inspired choice to interview the Army's top leaders about PTSD.

Watch the trailer [here](#).

For more information on PTSD, visit the VA's [National Center for PTSD](#)

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The elephant in the room with PTSD is that it is the result of engaging in and witnessing the everyday acts of war: which is to say extremely immoral, horrendously violent behavior. This is war in a nutshell, organized killing on a mass scale. For the Pentagon to admit that PTSD and psychological trauma are destroying its veterans is tantamount to admitting how deeply wrong and destructive the whole enterprise is. Quite a conundrum. When we will we all admit that these overseas killing sprees are a moral travesty? PTSD and the current rash of suicides are just one more destructive result of these pointless conflicts that we can't seem to stop foisting on the rest of the world.

*Written by Jimbo, 30 October 2010 10:56*

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PTSD, shell shock, or melancholia in soldiers is as much a part of war as a military band. The military has always been reluctant to recognize the emotional effects of war on soldiers for a number of reasons; preserving the necessary warrior ethos required to sustain combat operations; the military persona that serves as a powerful recruiting tool for an all-volunteer army; and not least of all, the public avoidance of a very hidden cost of war...ruined lives and families and the ongoing medical costs of treating the emotional wounds that require resources long into the future. There are solutions but they require addressing the reasons for the military's reluctance. Some of those solutions are technology based or come under the heading of alternative medicines. The military has only 35% of the mental health care professionals needed to meet current and future demand and the gap will continue for the foreseeable future. The military has to accept these "wounds" and pay for the care required to treat them just as they treat and amputation. I started a company, WebEMDR.com that has an online program for PTSD. 1500 users over the past year including PTSD victims at the VA and have found significant relief that is enduring. I started the company after I retired because of our government's cavalier attitude about the young men and women who got caught in the meat grinder of war and then came home where no one who sent them, believed the wounds they carried were real.

*Written by Jeff, 29 October 2010 23:59*

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