

# The NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL of MEDICINE

ESTABLISHED IN 1812

JULY 1, 2004

VOL. 351 NO. 1

## Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mental Health Problems, and Barriers to Care

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The report examined 3,671 soldiers and Marines three months after they returned from operations in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The study was conducted by administering an anonymous 45-minute written survey to 1,962 soldiers who had been deployed in Afghanistan, and to 1,709 soldiers and Marines who served in Iraq.

About 17% of U.S. soldiers surveyed who saw heavy combat in Iraq suffer from at least one major mental-health problem.

PTSD was found in 12.9% of combat soldiers returning from Iraq and 6.2% returning from Afghanistan.

A survey in the mid-1980s found 30% of Vietnam vets had experienced PTSD at some point since the war and 15% still had it at the time of the survey.

In the general population PTSD is found in 3% to 4% of people, from all causes.

A control group of 2,530 soldiers in a comparable unit just before deployment to Iraq had 9% mental-health problems even though their stress level was likely high due to their imminent deployment.

Depression and anxiety were higher in the returned combat veterans than in the soldiers surveyed before deployment.

The most significant problem was PTSD. Before deployment, 5% of the soldiers had PTSD. After returning from combat in Iraq, 13% of the soldiers and 12% of the Marines had the disorder.

COMBAT EXPERIENCES	Army (%)	Marines(%)
Saw dead bodies	93	94
Been shot at	93	97
Know someone wounded or killed	86	87
Saw injured or killed Americans	65	75
Responsible for enemy deaths	48	65
Engaged in hand-to-hand-combat	22	9
Were wounded	14	9

#### Reasons soldiers with mental health problems gave for not seeking help:

- They would be seen as weak: 65%
- Unit leadership might treat them differently: 63%
- Members of their unit might lose confidence in them: 59%
- Difficult to get time off for treatment: 55%
- Unit leaders would blame them for the problem: 51%
- It would harm their career: 50%
- Difficult to schedule an appointment: 45%