



The above mural honoring our Veterans through the era's is on display in our hallway and was created by local artist Galen McCarthy

# VICTOR SIERRA OSCAR COMMO CHECK!

## SPECIAL EDITION AUGUST 17, 2021

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# AFGHANISTAN PULL OUT

It's been a tragic week for Afghanistan and for the United States. It marks the end of our involvement in the war there as our troops pull out and head home or to other assignments. For the citizens of the country, especially those whom we had built relationships and friendships with, it has become a nightmare. The beheadings have begun and all semblance of order they had has been circumvented by the incoming regime.

We've all wanted this to be over but not at the cost of lives of scores of innocent people and the seizure of billions (yes, **BILLIONS**) of dollars of high-grade military equipment to include weapons, vehicles, Blackhawk helicopters, classified drones, ammunition and much more. It would be hard pressed to say that there weren't some classified documents that may have been seized at our embassy since it was evacuated hastily and left unguarded.

We have not suffered a "black eye" like this since 1975 at the fall of Vietnam. For our recent Veterans it is discouraging to say the least but to our Vietnam Vets many memories come racing back comparing the two "political" wars not to mention Korea. There are many parallels which prove "**We learn from history that we do not learn from history...**" ~ Georg Hegel

We are all proud of our time in service and donning our uniform exuded pride in excellence for what we did. However, overall reactions to this news differs from one individual to another.

I and others see no pride in the manner this event happened or as much as we know or understand that it happened.

As Servicemembers the general consensus that I have gathered is shock, anger and shame. Some even to go as far as wishing to take arms and return to finish the job.



1975 - Saigon

2021 - Kabul

**We have to remember that this unfortunate issue is NOT** a reflection on you personally, although you may consider it feels that way, a reflection of our government's leadership to make such a brash decision with minimal consideration to those who served or those who must try to survive in the aftermath. The politicians have not seen or experienced it first-hand nor have they faced the horrors that we were fighting to eliminate. I venture to say that they do not possess the pride that goes with representing our nation **as one would rally under one's Flag, OUR FLAG.**

**I received the following clip this morning and thought I'd share,** it's a reflection of how we are perceived by the world now and the lost stature of our nation.

An intelligence official from an Arab nation, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe evolving assessments, said officials had seen an uptick in jihadist communications about developments in Afghanistan. The Taliban takeover, this official said, "is encouraging many jihadists to think about traveling to Afghanistan now instead of Syria or Iraq."

According to a European intelligence official, the Taliban's victory has become a rallying cry for jihadist sympathizers there. "The U.S. appears in all of this now as a weak nation," he said.

An al-Qaeda fighter who goes by the name Abu Khaled said the Taliban's conquest was momentous for all extremists. "God willing, the success of the Taliban will be also a chance to unify mujahideen movements like al-Qaeda and Daesh," he said, using another name for the Islamic State.

**With all that said, remember that it's not you who is to blame,** you are as much part of the collateral damage as anyone. At this point it our job as CVSO's and individually as Veterans is to reach out and help those who are suffering. We were a team as we carried out our missions and now, as Veterans, we are still a team watching each other's back through the day to day struggles that are suffered.

**PLEASE take the time to do a "buddy check"** to be sure they are OK or that they receive the help that they need. More importantly, do your own buddy check and if you think that you could use someone to talk to just call your local CVSO or one from another county if you cannot get hold of yours.

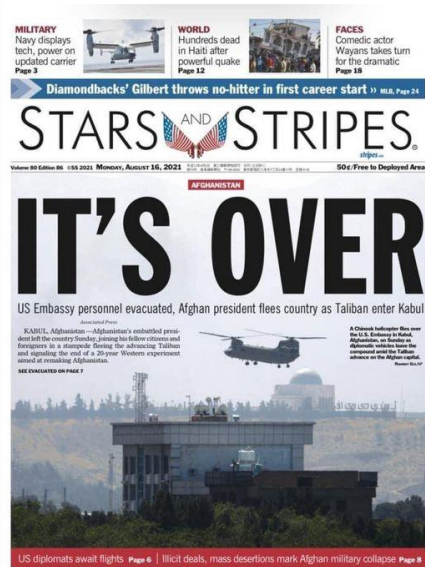
**To find CVSO's statewide** in Minnesota go online to [www.macvso.org](http://www.macvso.org), choose "FIND A VSO" and on the next page and either enter the county you want or the name of the CVSO you want.

**Also, as you read this and see [text that looks like this](#) you are at a hypertext link.** These allow you to go directly to the link that it applies to simply by hovering your mouse over it and pressing the "CTRL" key on your keyboard and key on your mouse simultaneously.

**Below is an article I copied from a VA email I received.** It spells out what might be happening with many Veterans and provides resources to assist in dealing with your stresses, sadness, anger, passiveness and more.

**If you would like to sign up for email updates** like this one please go online to [www.va.gov/VetResources](http://www.va.gov/VetResources) and receive them periodically in your email! **If you are having thoughts of suicide,** call 1-800-273-8255, then PRESS 1 or visit [www.veteranscrisisline.net/](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/)

**REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**



# Afghanistan: Let's Talk About It

VA News <veteransaffairs@messages.va.gov> Mon, Aug 16, 6:47 PM

Veterans from all eras are reacting to the events in Afghanistan, such as the U.S withdrawal and the takeover by the Taliban.

## You are not alone.

Veterans may question the meaning of their service or whether it was worth the sacrifices they made. They may feel more moral distress about experiences they had during their service. **It's normal to feel this way.** Talk with your friends and families, reach out to battle buddies, connect with a peer-to-peer network, or sign up for mental health services. Scroll down for a list common reactions and coping advice.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW

- **Veterans Crisis Line** - If you are having thoughts of suicide, call [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255), then PRESS 1 or visit <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
  - For emergency mental health care, you can also go directly to [your local VA medical center](#) 24/7 regardless of your discharge status or enrollment in other VA health care.
- **Vet Centers** - Discuss how you feel with other Veterans in these community-based counseling centers. **70% of Vet Center staff are Veterans.** Call [1-877-927-8387](tel:1-877-927-8387) or find one [near you](#).
- **[VA Mental Health Services Guide](#)** - This guide will help you sign up and access mental health services.
- **[MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.maketheconnection.net)** - information, resources, and Veteran to Veteran videos for challenging life events and experiences with mental health issues.
- **RallyPoint** - Talk to other Veterans online. Discuss: [What are your feelings as the Taliban reclaim Afghanistan after 20 years of US involvement?](#)
- **[Download VA's self-help apps](#)** - Tools to help deal with common reactions like, stress, sadness, and anxiety. You can also track your symptoms over time.
- **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)** - [Request a Peer Mentor](#)
- **VA Women Veterans Call Center** - Call or text [1-855-829-6636](tel:1-855-829-6636) (M-F 8AM - 10PM & SAT 8AM - 6:30PM ET)
- **VA Caregiver Support Line** - Call [1-855-260-3274](tel:1-855-260-3274) (M-F 8AM - 10PM & SAT 8AM - 5PM ET)
- **Together We Served** - [Find your battle buddies](#) through unit pages
- **George W. Bush Institute** - Need help or want to talk? [Check In](#) or call: [1-630-522-4904](tel:1-630-522-4904) or email: [checkin@veteranwellnessalliance.org](mailto:checkin@veteranwellnessalliance.org)
- **Elizabeth Dole Foundation Hidden Heroes** - [Join the Community](#)
- **American Red Cross Military Veteran Caregiver Network** - [Peer Support and Mentoring](#)
- **Team Red, White & Blue** - Hundreds of events weekly. [Find a chapter](#) in your area.
- **Student Veterans of America** - Find a [campus chapter](#) to connect with.
- **Team Rubicon** - Find a [local support](#) squad.



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# **COMMON REACTIONS**

In reaction to current events in Afghanistan, Veterans may:

- *Feel frustrated, sad, helpless, grief or distressed*
- *Feel angry or betrayed*
- *Experience an increase in mental health symptoms like symptoms of PTSD or depression*
- *Sleep poorly, drink more or use more drugs*
- *Try to avoid all reminders or media or shy away from social situations*
- *Have more military and homecoming memories*

Veterans may question the meaning of their service or whether it was worth the sacrifices they made. They may feel more moral distress about experiences they had during their service.

Veterans may feel like they need to expect and/or prepare for the worst. For example, they may:

- *Become overly protective, vigilant, and guarded*
- *Become preoccupied by danger*
- *Feel a need to avoid being shocked by, or unprepared for, what may happen in the future*

Feeling distress is a normal reaction to negative events, especially ones that feel personal. It can be helpful to let yourself feel those feelings rather than try to avoid them. Often, these feelings will naturally run their course. If they continue without easing up or if you feel overwhelmed by them, the suggestions below can be helpful.

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# **STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ONGOING DISTRESS**

At this moment, it may seem like all is lost, like your service or your sacrifices were for nothing. Consider the ways that your service made a difference, the impact it had on others' lives or on your own life. Remember that now is just one moment in time and that things will continue to change. It can be helpful to focus on the present and to engage in the activities that are most meaningful and valuable to you. Is there something you can do today that is important to you? This can be as an individual, a family member, a parent, or a community member.

Something that is meaningful to you in regard to your work or your spirituality? Such activities won't change the past or the things you can't control, but they can help life feel meaningful and reduce distress, despite the things you cannot change.

It can also help to consider your thinking. Ask yourself if your thoughts are helpful to you right now. Are there ways you can change your thinking to be more accurate and less distressing? For example, are you using extreme thinking where you see the situation as all bad or all good? If so, try and think in less extreme terms. For example, rather than thinking "my service in Afghanistan was useless" consider instead "I helped keep Afghanistan safe."

Finally, consider more general coping strategies that you may want to try, these are very important in mitigating the stress and other feelings that you may be having, these include:

- **Engage in Positive Activities.** Try to engage in positive, healthy, or meaningful activities, even if they are small, simple actions. Doing things that are rewarding, meaningful, or enjoyable, even if you don't feel like it, can make you feel better.
- **Stay Connected.** Spend time with people who give you a sense of security, calm, or happiness, or those who best understand what you are going through.

- **Practice Good Self Care.** Look for positive coping strategies that help you manage your emotions. Listening to music, exercising, practicing breathing routines, spending time in nature or with animals, journaling, or reading inspirational text are some simple ways to help manage overwhelming or distressing emotions.
- **Stick to Your Routines.** It can be helpful to stick to a schedule for when you sleep, eat, work, and do other day-to-day activities.
- **Limit Media Exposure.** Limit how much news you take in if media coverage is increasing your distress.
- **Use a mobile app.** Consider one of VA's self-help apps (see <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/>) such as PTSD Coach which has tools that can help you deal with common reactions like, stress, sadness, and anxiety. You can also track your symptoms over time.
- **PTSD Coach Online.** A series of online video coaches will guide you through 17 tools to help you manage stress. PTSD Coach Online is used on a computer, rather than a mobile device, and therefore can offer tools that involve writing.

If you develop your own ways of adapting to ongoing events and situations, you may gain a stronger sense of being able to deal with challenges, a greater sense of meaning or purpose, and an ability to mentor and support others in similar situations.

## Need to contact VA?

**Veterans Crisis Line:** [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255) and press 1, [Chat](#), or Text 838255

**Homeless Veteran Resources:** [1-877-424-3838](tel:1-877-424-3838) or [Chat](#)

**White House VA Hotline:** [1-855-948-2311](tel:1-855-948-2311)

Don't know what number to call?

[1-800-MyVA411](tel:1-800-MyVA411) ([800-698-2411](tel:800-698-2411)) is never the wrong number

### AFGHANISTAN: HOW VETERANS CAN LEARN FROM VIETNAM VETERANS

News Sections: Afghanistan Series, Top Stories

Published On: August 10th, 2021|1569 words|5.3 min read

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<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/92731/afghanistan-how-veterans-can-learn-from-vietnam-veterans/>

### AFGHANISTAN: HOW VETERANS CAN RECONCILE THEIR SERVICE

News Sections: Afghanistan Series, Top Stories

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Adam Stump

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/92631/afghanistan-how-veterans-can-reconcile-service/>

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