



# America's Defenders

## Surviving War is Just the Beginning

(NAPSA)—American soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan are surviving what were once fatal injuries thanks to high-tech body armor and rapid medical care. Recovering from those wounds, however, can be a long process.

That's why the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working closely with the Department of Defense (DoD) to provide the best possible care for America's combat wounded.

Last year, VA authorized free health care for veterans who served in combat after Nov. 11, 1998, for any conditions they feel are related to their service. That eligibility extends for two years after separation from the military and includes National Guard and Reserve members coming off active duty.

More than half of the U.S. military personnel wounded in Iraq have been unable to immediately return to duty. Many have separated from military service and are receiving rehabilitation and specialty care in VA hospitals.

Combat injuries often result in limb loss. VA offers prosthetic services at medical facilities across the country. Physical therapists help amputees master the latest prosthetic devices, including computerized legs with programmable memories and myoelectric arms that respond to the body's nerve impulses. Behind the scenes, VA and DoD researchers are collaborating on the next generation of artificial limbs with embedded microprocessors, composite materials and neural feedback systems.

Spinal cord injury can change a veteran's life forever. VA's network of 23 spinal cord injury and disorder centers links with veterans' hospitals and clinics throughout the country to provide the special-



ized care and support these injuries require.

VA's comprehensive blind rehabilitation program incorporates multi-disciplinary visual impairment service teams and blinded rehabilitation outpatient specialists at VA hospitals with 10 residential blind rehabilitation centers where blind and low-vision veterans learn how to regain their independence.

Following the 1991 Gulf War, VA and DoD established the Defense and Veterans Head Injury Program to provide evaluation, treatment and rehabilitation services for veterans who suffer traumatic brain injuries. The program includes a brain injury registry and regional clinical network, as well as research support.

VA offers counseling for combat veterans who experience difficulties adjusting to civilian life at 206 Vet Centers located in communities across the country. These services include confidential sessions with an experienced counselor and group therapy with other combat veterans.

For more information on VA services for Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom veterans, contact the nearest VA medical center or clinic and ask for the combat veteran coordinator, or call toll free 1-877-222-8387 or visit [www.vba.va.gov/EFIF/](http://www.vba.va.gov/EFIF/) on the Web.