

# AARIN

## Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network

### Preliminary Report on Veterans among Maricopa County Arrestees

April 2009



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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

**A Preliminary Report on Veterans in the Maricopa  
County Arrestee Population**

By

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## **Report Overview**

In early 2009, an Exploratory Committee was formed to investigate the potential creation of a Veterans Court in Maricopa County, Arizona. The Committee's initial efforts have focused on examining existing Veterans Courts and determining the size and scope of the problem (i.e., the number of veterans in the county jail). This report provides an overview of information on veterans in the Maricopa County Jail System, drawing on data collected by the Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network (AARIN). This report is intended to assist the work of the Veterans Court Exploratory Committee.

## **Background**

Recent studies indicate that many military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from a number of mental health-related issues, often caused by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injuries. For example, the Army's first study of the mental health of troops who fought in Iraq found that about one in eight reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The survey also showed that less than half of those with problems sought help (Associated Press, June 30, 2004).<sup>1</sup> The number of troops suffering from head injuries related to combat are equally alarming. A recent study showed that 20 percent of all frontline infantry troops suffer from concussions during combat (USA Today, May 2006).<sup>2</sup> Hoge et al. (2008)<sup>3</sup> surveyed 2,525 Army infantry soldiers three to four months after returning from deployment and found that approximately 15 percent reported experiencing traumatic brain injury, defined as loss of consciousness or altered mental status. The common signs and symptoms of these combat-related conditions include: cognitive issues such as decreased attention span, lack of motivation, irritability, depression and anxiety, increased fatigue, headaches, memory loss or disturbance, disrupted sleep, and behavioral issues.

Perhaps not surprisingly, these symptoms may also lead to substance abuse and other forms of anti-social behavior that draw the attention of the police and result in incarceration, where the disorders go untreated and can worsen. Unfortunately, little is known regarding the links between PTSD, traumatic brain injury and anti-social (or criminal) behavior among veterans – and the extent to which veterans end up in the criminal justice system.

## **Veterans Courts**

Recognizing the link between criminal conduct and service-related trauma, several jurisdictions, most notably Buffalo, New York, have created specialized courts to handle veterans' criminal cases. Modeled after drug courts, the Veterans Court seeks to funnel clients into counseling and support services that are closely supervised by a judge. In Buffalo, clients participate for approximately one year, and if all requirements are met, the criminal charges are dismissed.

The Buffalo Veterans Court has garnered significant media attention, including coverage in *USA Today* and National Public Radio. Perhaps not coincidentally, there have been a number of recent initiatives at the federal level to facilitate alternative approaches to justice system-involved veterans. For example, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, began offering funding in 2008 for

community programs that divert people with trauma-related disorders — and especially veterans — from the criminal justice system. Also, the Services, Education, and Rehabilitation for Veterans (SERV) Act, was introduced by Senator John Kerry (D-MA) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) in July of 2008 to create veteran drug treatment courts. The SERV Act is modeled on the Veterans Treatment Court in Buffalo. Similar Veterans Courts have been established or are in development in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Anchorage, Alaska, Rochester, New York and Orange County, California.

### **The Maricopa County Exploratory Committee**

In early 2009, an Exploratory Committee was formed to investigate the potential creation of a Veterans Court in Maricopa County, Arizona. The Committee, led by retired Superior Court Judge Kenneth Fields, includes representatives from the courts, adult probation, the county attorney's office, public defender, mental health providers, and veterans advocates (*Arizona Republic*, 1/6/09).<sup>4</sup> The Committee has engaged in a number of initial activities including examination of the Buffalo court, and according to *Arizona Republic*, the Committee intends to submit a proposal to Superior Court Presiding Judge Barbara Mundell by summer 2009.

One of the challenges facing the Exploratory Committee is the lack of available data documenting the number of veterans in the county jail system. Little is also known about the nature of their current charges, their criminal history, drug and alcohol use, and mental health issues including PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

### **Methodology used in present study**

The present study used interview data obtained from 617 recently booked adult male and female arrestees at three booking facilities in Maricopa County, Arizona as part of the Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network (AARIN). The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors sponsored research at Arizona State University and established AARIN in January 2007 to monitor drug use trends, treatment needs, and at-risk behavior among recently booked arrestees in Maricopa County. Each calendar quarter, professionally trained local staff conduct voluntary and anonymous interviews with adult males and females and juvenile boys and girls who have been arrested within the past 48 hours.

The interviews for this report included the core instrument for the AARIN project, as well as a detailed Veterans addendum. The Veterans Addendum was designed explicitly in response to requested data needs from the Maricopa County Manager's Office, specifically the Justice Systems and Planning Information unit (JSPI). The Veterans Addendum was designed as a threshold addendum, screening all AARIN participants for whether they had ever served in the United States military, including the Coast Guard and National Guard. The addendum was piloted in first quarter 2009.

For those respondents who identified themselves as veterans, questions were asked about whether they served in Iraq or Afghanistan, the branch of service, length of service and discharge, and the nature of their discharge. Additional questions asked about whether they suffered a physical injury during their service, and if so, the type of injury. Finally, respondents

were asked if they had been diagnosed or treated for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), another mental health problem, or a substance abuse problem since their military service. If the respondent indicated they had been diagnosed or treated for each of those conditions, they were asked about the type of treatment received. They were also asked to explain why they had not sought treatment, if that were the case.

Analysis for this report relied on our adult sample from first quarter 2009. Initially there were 697 adult arrestees approached for participation, and 617 of those who were eligible agreed to participate and provided a valid urine specimen. Among the 617 completed interviews, there were 43 respondents who reported veteran status (7%). The small number of veteran respondents is insufficient to generalize to the larger arrestee population, though it does provide for an initial review of preliminary findings. For a complete description of methodology, see Rodriguez, 2008.<sup>5</sup>

Exhibit 1 shows the characteristics of the participating arrestee sample, specifically comparing veterans and non-veterans. There were a few notable differences between veterans and non-veterans. Veterans were predominantly White (67.4% of veterans compared to 38.0% of non-veterans) and male (88.4% compared to 74.7% for non-veterans). Veterans were more likely to be high school graduates and to have achieved post high school education. Specifically, only 7% of veterans reported less than high school (compared to 39.2% of non-veterans), and nearly half reported post high school education. Residency and employment status in the past 30 days were similar for the two groups. On average, veterans were also older (40.4 years) than non-veterans (30.6 years).

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**Exhibit 1: Characteristics of the Arrestee Population by Veteran Status**


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	No		Yes		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
<b>Have you ever served in the United States Military?</b>	70.1	569	5.3	43	75.4	612
	Non-Veteran		Veteran		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	74.7	425	88.4	38	75.7	467
Female	25.3	144	11.6	5	24.3	150
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>						
Caucasian	38.0	216	67.4	29	40.0	245
African American	10.9	62	11.6	5	10.9	67
Hispanic	39.2	223	16.3	7	37.6	230
Other	12.0	68	4.7	2	11.4	70
<b>Education</b>						
Did not Graduate H.S.	39.2	223	7.0	3	36.9	226
High School Diploma	33.0	188	46.5	20	34.0	208
Post High School	27.8	158	46.5	20	29.1	178
<b>Residence last 30 days</b>						
Private Residence	91.9	523	88.4	38	91.7	561
Public or Group Housing	1.8	10	2.3	1	1.8	11
Incarcerated	0.2	1	2.3	1	0.3	2
Shelter	0.5	3	2.3	1	0.7	4
No Fixed Residence	5.3	30	4.7	2	5.2	32
Other	0.4	2	0.0	0	0.3	2
<b>Income last 30 days</b>						
Work Full Time	33.9	191	33.3	14	33.9	205
Work Part Time	22.6	127	21.4	9	22.5	136
Welfare	10.5	59	26.2	11	11.6	70
Family or other legal sources	16.3	92	7.1	3	15.7	95
Prostitution/drug dealing	3.4	19	7.1	3	3.6	22
Other illegal sources	5.5	31	2.4	1	5.3	32
No income	7.8	44	2.4	1	7.4	45
<b>Age (Mean)</b>	30.6		40.4		31.3	

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## Characteristics of Veterans' Service

Exhibit 2 shows some basic characteristics of the veteran respondents' military service. The table shows the distribution of their branch and length of service, time since discharge, and the nature of discharge. Most of the veterans in our sample served four years or less (86.1%), and had been discharged 10 years or more ago (60.5%). More than 80% received an honorable or general discharge.

<b>Exhibit 2: Characteristics of Veterans' Service</b>		
	%	n
<b>In which branch did you serve?</b>		
Army	53.5	23
Navy	14.0	6
Air Force	7.0	3
Marines	18.6	8
National Guard	7.0	3
<b>How long did you serve?</b>		
Less than 1 Year	20.9	9
1 - 2 Years	14.0	6
3 - 4 Years	51.2	22
5 - 10 Years	9.3	4
More than 10 years	4.7	2
<b>How long ago were you discharged?</b>		
Less than 1 Year	4.7	2
1 - 2 Years	14.0	6
3 - 4 Years	16.3	7
5 - 10 Years	4.7	2
More than 10 years	60.5	26
<b>Describe the nature of your discharge?</b>		
Honorable	65.1	28
General	16.3	7
Other than Honorable	11.6	5
Bad Conduct	0.0	0
Dishonorable	7.0	3

Exhibit 3 shows the characteristics of the veterans' time in service, specifically whether they served in Iraq or Afghanistan since September 11, 2001, whether they were physically injured, or have been diagnosed or treated for particular problems since their service. Only 21% of veterans in our sample had served in Iraq or Afghanistan post-9/11. Problems associated with their military service were relatively common, however. Nearly 28% had been physically injured,

26.5% had been diagnosed or treated for PTSD, 34.9% for another mental health problem, and 16.3% had been diagnosed or treated for a substance abuse problem since their military service. Taken together, 24 of the 43 veterans in this study reported have at least one of the above problems or issues (56%), and many reported multiple problems.

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**Exhibit 3: Characteristics of Veterans Time in Service**

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	No		Yes		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Did you serve in Iraq or Afghanistan after September 11, 2001?	79.1	34	20.9	9	100.0	43
Were you physically injured during military service?	72.1	31	27.9	12	100.0	43
Have you been diagnosed or treated for PTSD since your military service?	72.1	31	26.5	11	97.7	42
Have you been diagnosed or treated for mental health problem other than PTSD since your military service?	62.8	27	34.9	15	97.7	42
Have you been diagnosed or treated for substance abuse since your military service?	81.4	35	16.3	7	97.7	42

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**Drug Use by Veteran Status**

The AARIN instrument collects self-reported drug use information over the past month and year, as well as drug test results from urine specimens collected at the time of the interview. Drug use was common among the 43 veteran arrestees. Twenty-six (61%) reported any drug use during the past year, and 17 (40%) reported any drug use in the past 30 days. Moreover, 14 (33%) tested positive for an illegal substance at the time of the interview. Exhibit 4 below shows 12-month, 30-day, and urinalyses for marijuana, crack cocaine, powder cocaine, and methamphetamine by veteran status. Past 12 month drug use was similar for veterans and non-veterans, although there were a few notable differences. Specifically, we found that 30.2% of veterans reported having used methamphetamine in the past 12 months, and 30.0% also tested positive for the drug. Non-veterans reported using methamphetamine in the past 12 months only 22.8% of the time, and 26.1% tested positive. Marijuana use in the past 12 months was similar, 44.2% among veterans compared to 49.2% among non-veterans, but urinalysis results differed, with 27% of veterans testing positive compared to 41% of non-veterans.

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**Exhibit 4: Drug Use by Veteran Status**


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	Non-Veteran		Veteran		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
<b>Marijuana</b>						
Past 12 Months	49.2	280	44.2	19	48.9	602
Past 30 Days	39.7	226	25.6	11	38.9	240
Urinalysis	41.4	209	26.7	8	40.6	217
<b>Powder Cocaine</b>						
Past 12 Months	12.1	69	16.3	7	12.3	76
Past 30 Days	7.0	40	9.3	4	7.1	44
Urinalysis	12.7	64	10.0	3	12.5	67
<b>Crack Cocaine</b>						
Past 12 Months	8.4	48	11.6	5	8.6	53
Past 30 Days	5.4	31	7.0	3	5.5	34
Urinalysis	12.7	64	10.0	3	12.5	67
<b>Methamphetamine</b>						
Past 12 Months	22.8	130	30.2	13	23.4	144
Past 30 Days	17.6	100	16.3	7	17.5	108
Urinalysis	26.1	132	30.0	9	26.4	141

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**Offense Severity by Veteran Status**

Exhibit 5 below shows the most serious type of offense on the current arrest by veteran status. Approximately 16% of veterans were arrested for violent charges, and 23.3% were arrested for property charges. An additional 14% were arrested on drug charges. Most veterans were arrested for miscellaneous offenses (46.5%), including disorderly conduct, failure to appear/pay fines, driving on a suspended license, and probation violations. The current offense was similar among veteran and non-veteran arrestees, though veterans were slightly less likely to be arrested on drug charges.

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**Exhibit 5: Most Serious Current Charge by Veteran Status**


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	Non-Veteran		Veteran		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Violent	18.8	106	16.3	7	18.8	115
Drug	24.0	135	14.0	6	23.2	142
Property	21.5	121	23.3	10	21.8	133
Other	35.7	201	46.5	20	36.2	221
Mean # of Arrests (past year)	.83		1.14		.85	

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## Victimization by Veteran Status

Exhibit 6 displays whether the respondent reported having been the victim of a violent crime during the past 12 months. The four categories of victimization were constructed from seven questions: 1) have you been threatened with a gun; 2) have you been shot at; 3) have you been shot; 4) have you been threatened with a weapon other than a gun; 5) have you been injured with a weapon other than a gun; 6) have you been assaulted or attacked without a weapon; and 7) have you been robbed.

In all four categories, veterans reported high rates of victimization. Among veterans, nearly half (46.5%) reported being a victim of a firearm related crime in the past 12 months, and 39.5% reported being victimized with another type of weapon. Assault and robbery victimization rates were also high (30.2% and 20.9%, respectively). Taken together, 27 of the 43 veterans (63%) in this study reported being victimized in the last 12 months. These victimization rates are substantially higher than the rates experienced by no-veteran arrestees.

**Exhibit 6: Victimization by Status**

	Non-Veteran		Veteran		Total	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Victimized Past 12 Months						
Gun Crime	15.1	86	46.5	20	17.3	106
Non-Gun Weapons Crime	16.3	93	39.5	17	17.9	110
Assaulted or Attacked	18.8	107	30.2	13	19.6	120
Robbed	12.3	70	20.9	9	12.9	79

## **Conclusion**

This report presents information obtained from interviews of 617 recently booked arrestees in Maricopa County, Arizona, as part of the Arizona Arrestee Reporting Information Network (AARIN). The objective of this report is to provide basic information on the prevalence of military veterans in the arrestee population, as well as background information on their military service, demographics, and service-related problems.

Seven percent of the arrestees interviewed were military veterans (43 of 617). The 43 veteran arrestees were primarily older white males who were well-educated. Most were discharged from the military more than a decade ago – only 20% served in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of the 43 veterans have problems either directly or indirectly related to their military service including physical injuries, traumatic brain injuries, PTSD, other mental health issues and substance abuse. Although most had not been arrested for serious charges and they were not gang-involved, the veteran arrestees reported very high rates of victimization (i.e., being a victim of a crime).

Overall, though their number (and percentage) in the jail population is relatively small, the veterans in this study suffer from a number of service-related problems and are likely in need of medical and psychological services – as well as substance abuse treatment. Moreover, veteran involvement in the criminal justice system is likely to increase substantially as soldiers currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan begin returning home in 2010-2011.

## **About the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety**

Arizona State University, in order to deepen its commitment to the communities of Arizona and to society as a whole, has set a new standard for research universities, as modeled by the New American University. Accordingly, ASU is measured not by whom we exclude, but by whom we include.

The University is pursuing research that considers the public good and is assuming a greater responsibility to our communities for economic, social, and cultural vitality. Social embeddedness – university-wide, interactive, and mutually-supportive partnerships with Arizona communities – is at the core of our development as a New American University.

Toward the goal of social embeddedness, in response to the growing need of our communities to improve the public's safety and well-being, in July 2005 ASU established the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety. The Center's mission is to generate, share, and apply quality research and knowledge to create "best practice" standards.

Specifically, the Center evaluates policies and programs; analyzes and evaluates patterns and causes of violence; develops strategies and programs; develops a clearinghouse of research reports and "best practice" models; educates, trains, and provides technical assistance; and facilitates the development and construction of databases.

For more information about the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety, please contact us using the information provided below.

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Associated Press (2004, June 30). 1 in 8 returning soldiers suffers from PTSD. *Associated Press*, Accessed: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5334479/> .
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