

Concerning Suicide Data Released in Late Friday Report

New York, NY (September 15, 2017) – Following is a statement from Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the leading voice of the Post-9/11 generation of veterans, regarding the VA [report](#) released this evening on veteran suicide statistics. The report revealed that veteran suicide could be as much as 22% higher than the civilian population. RAND analyst and expert Rajeev Ramchand [suggests](#) that the data may indicate that social isolation, access to firearms, and access to [healthcare](#) factored into the prevalence of veterans suicide.

“Tonight’s report is deeply concerning. It also confirms much of the anecdotal information and research that we have received from our members for over a decade,” **said Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and CEO of IAVA.**

“Especially during September, national Suicide Prevention Month, the American public needs to be informed and engaged on veterans suicide. A 5PM Friday press release is a bad way to ensure that the public is aware. It’s past time that this issue becomes a true national priority for the White House and all Americans. Too many of our brothers and sisters are dying. We will continue to analyze the data and committed to working with VA, the Pentagon and all our partners nationwide to tackle suicide and provide any data and support we can,” **continued Rieckhoff.**

In IAVA’s most recent Member Survey, 54 percent of respondents know at least one Iraq or Afghanistan veteran who has attempted suicide, while 40 percent of respondents know someone who has died by suicide. A staggering 40 percent of respondents have thought about taking their own life since joining the military.

For nearly a decade, IAVA and the veteran community have long called for immediate action by our nation’s leaders to end this crisis. In that time, we have lost too many friends, but there has been some progress—most notably the passage of the IAVA-led Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act of 2015. We saw further success when the IAVA-backed Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act of 2016 was enacted. Also in 2016, at IAVA’s urging, VA Secretary Bob McDonald elevated the Suicide Prevention Office within VA and further resourced it, empowering the office to address suicide prevention in a broader, public health context. But there is still much work to be done. There can be no rest until every veteran and every service member has access to the best mental health care and community support. Working with community groups, Congress and the Administration must lend the full force of the federal government to this problem to better identify and support those in crisis and dramatically improve access to and the quality of mental health care.

Click [here](#) to visit a timeline of IAVA’s work on combating suicide.

This press release has been updated from an earlier version.