

Study Shows Increased Misuse Of Prescription Drugs in Military

For nearly two decades, illicit drug use among active-duty military personnel within the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) fell dramatically, from 28 percent in 1980 to less than 3 percent in 1998.

But then the picture began to change.

While use rates for illicit drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine among service men and women have remained encouragingly low, overall drug use in recent years has risen sharply (figure 1).

This unsettling surge is driven not by an uptick in the use of “street” drugs, but almost exclusively by a steep rise in the misuse of prescription drugs, particularly pain relievers.

According to a new DoD survey, past-month non-medical use of prescription drugs among active-duty DoD personnel doubled from 2002 (2 percent) to 2005 (4 percent). From 2005 to 2008, the rate almost tripled, soaring to 11 percent. Meanwhile, use of other, non-prescription illicit drugs has hovered around 2 percent since 2002.

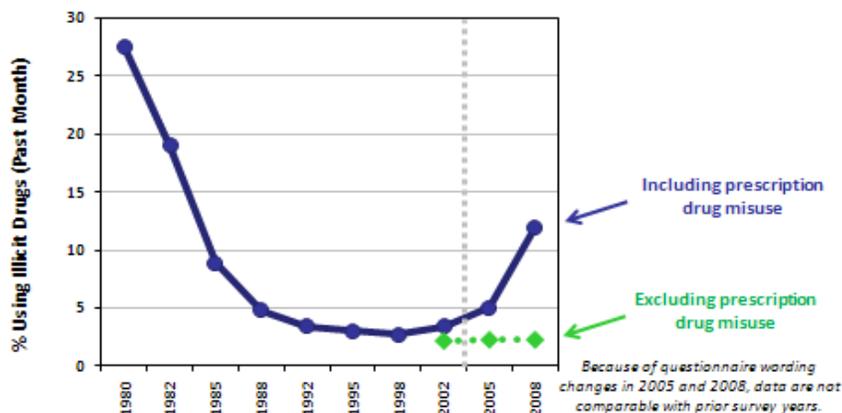
The survey questionnaire changed in 2005 and 2008, and the U.S. Coast Guard was not added to the survey until 2008, so exact comparisons are difficult to make. Still, the trends are clear, and they strongly

See Military, page 2

Inside This Issue

Drug Use in the Military	1
The Threat to Returning Veterans	1
New Housing, New Hope	
For Homeless Female Veterans	3
Drug Use <i>Myths & Facts</i>	3
Law Enforcement Update	4

Figure 1
Drug Use Among Active-Duty Military Personnel,* 1980-2008



*Department of Defense services only (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force).

Sources: Bray, et al., 2002 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Military Personnel (November 2003) and Bray, et al., 2008 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Active Duty Military Personnel (September 2009).

From the Director

The Threat to Returning Veterans: Substance Abuse

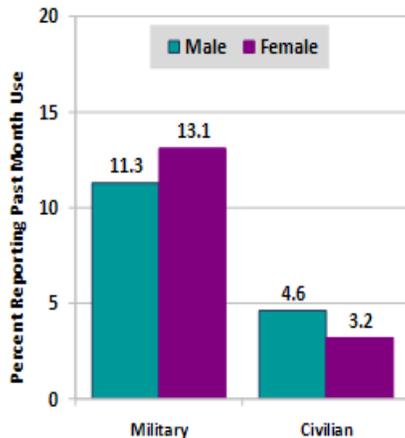
As we honor the efforts and sacrifices of our soldiers on distant battlefields, Americans should keep in mind the enduring debt we owe to our country's military veterans. While news accounts remind us daily of the dangers soldiers confront in combat, we don't often see a threat they frequently face when they return home: substance abuse.

Just as no soldier fights alone, no soldier with a substance abuse problem suffers alone. Surveys by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) between 2004 and 2006 found that 7.1 percent of veterans met the criteria for a past-year substance abuse disorder. Substance abuse doesn't just wreak havoc on individuals' health; it also contributes to violence, abuse, and other crises in family relationships, including family disintegration.

As with other military conflicts, operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have required U.S. soldiers to shoulder burdens that can be overwhelming. Officials in the military and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are concerned that among personnel deployed to these fronts, the difficulties of deployment and combat may be contributing to a rise in problems related to substance abuse.

Soldiers who have seen combat face particular risk. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, substance abuse rates appear to be strongly related to combat exposure. One study found that one in four veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan reported symptoms of

Figure 2
Prescription Drug Misuse Among Military Personnel vs. Civilians, By Gender, 2008



NOTE: Military includes Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard. Civilian data have been standardized to match the demographic distribution of U.S.-based military.

Sources: Bray, et al., 2008 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Active Duty/Military Personnel (September 2008) and civilian data from the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Military (continued from page 1)

suggest a growing pervasiveness of prescription drug misuse among our Nation's fighting forces.

The 2008 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Active Duty Military Personnel, released in December 2009, showed that about one in eight active-duty service members (11.9 percent) in all branches of the military, including the Coast Guard, reported using drugs in the past month.

The survey also produced a number of other, perhaps surprising findings. For example, standardized estimates for comparing military and civilian populations show that in 2008:

- The percentage of men and women reporting prescription drug misuse in all military services combined (11.5 percent) was more than twice that of the civilian population in the age group 18-64 (4.4 percent).
- Prescription drug abuse among women on active duty (13.1 percent) was more than four times the rate for civilian women (3.2 percent), as shown in figure 2.
- While civilian males are substantially more likely than civilian females to use an illicit drug, females in the military were shown to have a slightly higher rate of past-month use compared to males.

The survey revealed some major gender differences regarding drug use within the services:

- Except in the Marine Corps, women in the military tend to be more likely than their male counterparts to use illicit drugs.
- Army women are more than twice as likely as men in the Air Force, Coast Guard, and Navy to have used any illicit drug, including prescription drugs used non-medically, in the past month.

The 2008 survey is the latest in a series that has been conducted every three or four years since 1980 by the Defense Department to measure substance abuse and other health behaviors in the Armed Forces.

The report can be found online at www.tricare.mil/2008HealthBehaviors.pdf

Veterans (continued from page 1)

a mental health disorder, and one in six reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These disorders are strongly associated with substance abuse and dependence among returning military personnel, as are others, including sleep disturbances, traumatic brain injury, and violence in relationships. Mental health disorders and even suicide can also result when the strains of military service are compounded by substance abuse.

Important new data show active-duty military personnel are struggling with substance abuse at alarming rates, as well. In 2008, about one in eight reported past-month illicit drug use, largely driven by prescription drug abuse. (See article, page 1.) Misuse of prescription drugs among active duty military almost tripled from 2005 to 2008 and is more than double that of the civilian population. The problem is particularly acute for women who serve. Prescription drug abuse among active duty women is more than four times higher than among civilian women.

Women suffering from the disease of addiction often face unique barriers to treatment. Child care responsibilities and psychological trauma resulting from sexual or other physical abuse make placement in effective treatment programs a difficult endeavor. Despite research showing significantly better outcomes when mothers and their children are able to access treatment services together, family-based treatment programs comprise only about five percent of our Nation's overall treatment availability.

There is good news. Last month, thanks to grants from the VA and the Florida Department of Children and Families, the Center for Drug-Free Living broke ground on a new women-only supportive housing facility for homeless female veterans and their children in Cocoa, Florida. Through Operation Home Front, female homeless veterans who have substance use and mental health disorders will be provided a comprehensive array of services that will help them achieve recovery and restore their relationships with their children. (See article, page 3).

We can do much good by promoting and expanding such programs, and we owe our country's proud veterans no less. Ensuring veterans and their families have access to quality, comprehensive substance abuse treatment will help America meet its obligation to care for veterans and their families.

– Gil Kerlikowske



Director Kerlikowske (center, right) breaks ground for Operation Home Front with help from, among others, Tammy Duckworth, Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (center), and Deputy Assistant to the President Tina Tchen (center, left).

New Housing to Offer New Hope for Female Veterans in Need

National Drug Policy Director Gil Kerlikowske, joined by other Federal and State officials, broke ground last month on Operation Home Front, a new transitional housing facility for homeless female veterans and their children in Cocoa, Florida.

“Far too many brave women who served their country are returning home with physical, mental health, and substance abuse problems that impact their ability to maintain strong families,” said Director Kerlikowske. “Family-based treatment

programs like Operation Home Front fulfill an important need in coordinating comprehensive services for mothers and their children. The families who will live here will receive an array of effective services, dignity, hope, and new opportunity.”

The \$1.6 million, 8,486-square-foot facility will include seven units, each with two bedrooms and common living and dining areas. Operation Home Front will provide housing and substance use/mental health disorder services for 28 homeless female veterans and their children.

Joining Director Kerlikowske for the event was Tammy Duckworth, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Tina Tchen, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Council on Women and Girls.

“In today’s military,” said Assistant Secretary Duckworth, “women assume responsibilities and leadership roles that were not possible in the past. When they return from the battlefield, we have a solemn duty to care for the needs of women veterans and to understand the mental and physical wounds of war.”

Funded by grants from the VA and the Florida Department of Children and Families, Operation Home Front will be operated by the Center for Drug-free Living, Inc., a comprehensive behavioral health services organization. The Center has been serving Florida for more than 37 years, providing prevention, intervention, and treatment services to individuals and families coping with substance use and mental health disorders, juvenile delinquency, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other health issues.

Drug Use

Myths & Facts

Myth: Substance abuse affects only a small number of people in the United States.

Fact: Substance abuse affects all Americans. An estimated 22 million people in the United States struggle with a drug or alcohol problem, and more than 125 million know someone with a substance abuse problem. If untreated, the disease can destroy individuals and families, damaging the fabric of entire communities. And every one of us bears the economic costs. In 2002, drug abuse resulted in \$16 billion in healthcare costs, \$108 billion in crime-related costs, and nearly \$130 billion in lost productivity.

Law Enforcement Update

Hundreds Arrested Across the U.S. In Massive Drug Trafficking Sweep

More than 300 people in 19 States were arrested in October 2009 as part of Project Coronado, an operation targeting the distribution network of a major Mexican drug trafficking organization known as La Familia.

Project Coronado, a coordinated effort by Federal, State, and local law enforcement, has led to the arrest of 1,186 individuals and the seizure of approximately \$33 million in U.S. currency, 4,000 pounds of cocaine, nearly 3,000 pounds of methamphetamine, 29 pounds of heroin, 16,000 pounds of marijuana, 389 weapons, 269 vehicles, and two clandestine drug labs.

The October arrests were made throughout the United States, from California to Oklahoma, Missouri, Tennessee, South Carolina, and 14 other States.



**Beltran Leyva,
'Boss of Bosses,'
Killed in Mexico**

Acting on information from U.S. and Mexican officials last December, heavily armed Mexican marines quietly evacuated an upscale apartment complex in Cuernavaca before some 200 troops stormed the building and demanded the surrender of Arturo Beltran Leyva, one of the world's most brutal drug lords.

Beltran Leyva and six associates died in a shootout after they refused to surrender. One marine was killed by a grenade launched by assailants, and two other marines were wounded.

Troops detained two women and one man and seized \$40,000, along with five assault weapons.

Coast Guard and Partner Agencies Seized \$5 Billion In Illicit Drugs Destined for the U.S. Last Year

More than 175 tons of cocaine and 35 tons of marijuana – approximately \$5 billion worth of illicit drugs – never made it to our streets or into the hands of America's youth last year, thanks to the interdiction efforts of the U.S. Coast Guard and its partner agencies.

In FY 2009, described by officials as a banner year for interrupting the flow of drugs into the United States, the Coast Guard and its interagency partners also seized or disrupted 58 vessels and detained 322 suspected drug traffickers on the high seas.

"I am pleased to announce another successful year for our international partnerships and interagency efforts stopping illegal drug traffickers at sea," said Admiral Thad Allen, Commandant of the Coast Guard and chairman of the government's Interdiction Committee, speaking in Florida last month at Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater.

Joining him for the January 28 announcement were officials from the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the U.S. Attorney's Office; Customs and Border Protection; and the Joint Interagency Task Force South, which is based in Key West and serves as the national center for detecting and monitoring illicit drugs being smuggled through the transit zone toward the United States.

Although the Coast Guard is the Nation's lead agency for maritime law enforcement, drug interdiction involves coordination among many agencies and groups, including those mentioned above as well as the U.S. Navy and partner nations. The Coast Guard directs and undertakes law enforcement of suspected vessels, and prosecution is conducted by the U.S. Attorney's Office.

National Drug Policy Director Gil Kerlikowske, responding to the announcement, praised the efforts of the interagency community and international partners:

"The Obama Administration recognizes your interdiction successes protect countless lives from the dangers of drug abuse, trafficking, and production, and consequently has made disrupting drug trafficking networks, along with strengthening prevention and treatment efforts, a cornerstone of the 2010 *National Drug Control Strategy*."

Year-Long Investigation Yields Stiff Sentence for Cocaine Kingpin

A Federal judge last month sentenced Jesus Manuel Fierro-Mendez, 47, of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to 27 years in Federal prison for conspiracy to distribute cocaine. His arrest and prosecution were the result of a year-long investigation conducted by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Between late 2006 and August 2007, the organization led by Fierro-Mendez transported approximately 110 pounds of cocaine per week from Ciudad Juarez to El Paso, TX, and from there to Indianapolis, IN, and other U.S. cities.



"El Teo" Simental"

Violent Drug Trafficker Arrested in Mexico

The Mexican government announced in January it had captured Eduardo Teodoro "El Teo" Garcia Simental, one of the world's most violent and brutal drug traffickers.

Simental is under indictment in Mexico on five counts, including drug trafficking, racketeering, and homicide. He also could face other charges in the United States.