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A Hard Look at Casualty Numbers

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Soldiering is a dangerous business -- even in peacetime -- and we mourn the death of any member of our armed forces no matter what its cause. A new report for members of Congress from the [Congressional Research Service](#) provides some astounding statistics:

During the five-year period from March 19, 2003 to April 5, 2008, 4,005 members of our armed forces died in Operation Iraqi Freedom *from all causes* including illness and accident. This averages 801 deaths per year -- and every one a tragedy.

But the CRS also reports that in 2003, the total number of deaths among members of the active-duty US armed forces totaled 1,410 -- which means that Iraq accounted for a bit more than 50 percent of the total. The corresponding numbers for 2004 are 1,873, for 2005 up slightly to 1,941 and for 2006 down slightly to 1,875.

What's astonishing is that the corresponding number of active-duty deaths for 1982 -- President Reagan's first full year in office -- is 2,319. In 1989 -- when President Reagan left office in January to be succeeded by President George H.W. Bush -- total military deaths were 1,693.

In short, what the CRS study shows is that each year between 1,000 and 2,000 members of our active-duty armed forces die *regardless of whether we're at war or peace*.

In case you were wondering, back in 1980 -- President Jimmy Carter's last full year in office -- the total number of active-duty military deaths was 2,392 -- higher than the number in any year of George W. Bush's presidency.

Read the CRS report; it's an eye-opener.

Update from Dennis Sevakis:

Some perspective on the number of military deaths during the Iraq/Afghanistan war years versus earlier periods
Figures in yellow are the rates per 100,000 of total full-time-equivalent (FTE) military personnel.

	Calendar Year	NUMBER OF MILITARY DEATHS BY CAUSE						NUMBER OF MILITARY PERSONNEL						
		Total Deaths	Hostile Accident	Hostile Action	Homicide	Illness	Pending	Self-Inflicted	Terrorist Attack	Undertaken	Active Duty (a)	Full-Time Reserve Guard/Res (b)	Total Military FTE (c)	
REAGAN	1981	2,380	1,524		145	457		241			132,093,032	22,000	91,719,206,751	
	1982	2,319	1,495		108	446		254			162,112,609	41,000	97,458,251,067	
	1983	2,465	1,413	18	115	419		218	263		192,123,909	49,000	100,455,273,364	
	1984	1,999	1,293	1	84	374		225	6		162,138,339	55,000	104,583,297,922	
	1985	2,252	1,476		111	363		275	5		222,150,379	64,000	108,806,323,185	
	1986	1,984	1,199	2	103	384		269			272,177,845	69,000	113,010,359,855	
	1987	1,983	1,172	37	104	383		260	2		252,166,611	71,000	115,086,352,697	
	1988	1,819	1,080		90	321		285	17		262,121,659	72,000	115,836,309,495	
	TOTAL	17,201	10,652	58	860	3,147		2,027	293	164				
	AVG / YR	2,150	1,332	7	108	393		253	37		212,135,548	55,375	105,869,296,792	
RATE/100k	94	58	0	5	17	0	11	2	1					
BUSH I	1989	1,636	1,000	23	58	294		224			372,112,128	74,200	117,056,303,384	
	1990	1,507	880		74	277		232	1		432,046,806	74,250	137,268,258,324	
	1991	1,787	931	147	112	308		256			331,943,937	70,250	184,002,198,189	
	1992	1,293	676		109	252		238	1		171,773,996	67,850	111,491,953,337	
	TOTAL	6,223	3,487	170	353	1,131		950	2	130				
	AVG / YR	1,556	872	43	88	283		238	1		331,969,217	71,638	137,454,178,309	
RATE/100k	71	40	2	4	13	0	11	0	1					
CLINTON	1993	1,213	632		86	221		236	29		91,675,269	68,500	105,768,849,537	
	1994	1,075	544		83	206		232			101,581,649	65,000	99,833,174,482	
	1995	1,040	538		67	174		250	7		41,502,343	65,000	94,585,166,192,8	
	1996	974	527	1	52	173		188	19		141,456,266	65,000	92,409,161,310	

	1997	817	433		42	170		159		131,418,773	65,000	94,6091,578,382
	1998	827	445		26	168	10	161	3	141,381,034	65,000	92,5361,538,570
	1999	796	436		37	150	13	145		151,367,838	65,000	93,1041,525,942
	2000	758	398		34	138		151	17	201,372,352	65,000	93,0781,530,430
	TOTAL	7,500	3,953	1	427	1,400	23	1,522	75	99		
	AVG / YR	938	494	0	53	175	3	190	9	121,469,441	65,438	95,7401,630,573
	RATE/100k	57	30	0	3	11	0	12	1	1		
BUSH II	2001	891	437	3	49	185	1	140	55	211,384,812	65,000	102,2841,552,196
	2002	999	547	18	51	190	6	160		271,411,200	66,000	149,9421,627,142
	2003	1,228	440	344	36	207	16	167		181,423,348	66,000	243,2841,732,632
	2004	1,874	604	739	46	270	19	188		81,411,287	66,000	234,6291,711,916
	2005	1,942	632	739	49	281	72	150		191,378,014	66,000	220,0001,664,014
	2006	1,858	465	753	30	205	238	155		121,378,014	66,000	220,0001,664,014
	TOTAL	8,792	3,125	2,596	261	1,338	352	960	55	105		
	AVG / YR	1,465	521	433	44	223	59	160	9	181,397,779	65,833	195,0231,658,652
	RATE/100k	88	31	26	3	13	4	10	1	1		

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf>

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, Statistical Information Analysis Division,

[http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/Death_Rates.pdf], accessed on June 27, 2007.

Notes: As of February 28, 2007 (reflects preliminary counts for 2006 and revised figures for 2004 AND 2005).

a. Official Department of Defense end-strengths as of December 31 for military pay accounts.

Excludes full time Guard and Reserve.

b. Full time equivalent (FTE) is based on official Department of Defense fiscal year end selected reserve strength (10% of the figure is used to estimate days on active duty).

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