

Record Number of U.S. Soldiers Committed Suicide in 2007 by Ted Moore

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A record number of U.S. soldiers who have served in Afghanistan or Iraq committed suicide or injured themselves last year, a study says.

A draft of an internal study indicated suicides among active-duty U.S. soldiers in 2007 were at their highest level since the Army began keeping such statistics, [The Washington Post](#) reported. In 2007, 121 soldiers killed themselves, nearly 20 percent more than in the previous year.

The number of attempted suicides or self-inflicted injuries in the Army was about 2,100, a sixfold jump since the Iraq war began in March 2003, the U.S. Army Medical Command Suicide Prevention Action Plan said.

Suicides and attempted suicides "are continuing to rise despite a lot of things were doing now and have been doing," said Col. Elspeth Cameron Ritchie, the Army's top psychiatrist and study author. "We need to improve training and education. We need to improve our capacity to provide behavioral health care."

Common factors found in suicides and attempted suicides included failed personal relationships, legal, financial or job-related problems, and frequency and length of deployments.

The report said the current Army Suicide Prevention Program "was not originally designed for a combat-deployment environment," the Post said.

A conclusive example is the case of Lt. Elizabeth Whiteside, who tried to kill herself twice. Whiteside suffered a nervous breakdown last year in Iraq and attempted to commit suicide. After that incident she faced criminal charges for attempted suicide and endangering the life of another soldier, the Post reported.

While waiting for the Army's decision at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the officer tried to take her own life again on Monday with an overdose of pills.

Whiteside is just one of the thousands of soldiers who have attempted to commit suicide over the past period as the Army tries to implement new programs to improve the mental health of servicemen.