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placing a demand on medical skills and resources beyond even the Viet Nam war.

We have also learned that the short and long term psychological effects of intensive war are as devastating as the physical. On average, we can expect one suicide death for every two physical injury deaths. A Persian Gulf war may well cause a level of post traumatic stress syndrome exceeding the horrible experiences of Viet Nam.

The Medical Response

What are U.S. military plans and capabilities for medically responding to this war?

A December news report said the Pentagon had shipped in less than half the doctors and hospital beds its own plans say are needed. The Army's standard practice calls for at least 11,000 beds in the Gulf area, but only 4-5,000 were there or *en route*. The Navy has two hospital ships adequate for expected Navy casualties, but they will not be able to meet the Army's needs.

In Viet Nam, we had years to develop efficient medical trauma teams. Medical personnel in the Gulf will be deluged with vast numbers of highly complicated injuries from Day One. The number of sufficiently trained and experienced trauma surgeons is woefully inadequate.

Plans call for many stabilized, severely wounded to be evacuated to hospitals in the U.S. - military hospitals at home may well be overwhelmed. Local hospitals, notably Harborview Medical Center and Seattle's VA hospital, have already been contacted to care for war casualties. Harborview, the region's trauma center, has one of the nation's largest burn units. Only three of the unit's 22 beds is unoccupied today. If the military needs these beds and medical teams, who will care for our community's own burn victims?

Care of burn victims is extremely expensive and medically intensive. Vast amounts of nursing and physician time, blood, plasma, antibiotics, and repeated surgeries are required *by each patient*. Each of these cases can require months of hospitalization and hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Nightmare Scenarios

Murphy's Law - Anything that can go wrong, will - was invented by the military. We have been describing war by the books using conservative estimates and figures - a dream scheme, if you will. There are also nightmare scenarios.

Saddam has stated that any attack on Iraq will mean an immediate attack on Israel. Israel has promised to retaliate. Both countries say they will use all the destructive power in their arsenals. Iraq is known to have chemical and biologic weapons, as well as missiles to reach Tel Aviv and the Saudi oil fields. While much attention has focussed on using these weapons against troops, they are too inaccurate and desert