

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs will examine alarmingly high suicide rates among returning veterans in a continuation of the committee's push to improve mental health care for our nation's returning veterans.

Last week, [an investigation by CBS News uncovered a startling number of suicides among veterans.](#) According to CBS' report, "In 2005... there were at least 6,256 suicides among those who served in the armed forces. That's 120 each and every week, in just one year." The report also revealed that the Department of Veterans' Affairs is not collecting data on veteran suicides. [Source: [CBS News](#) , Nov. 13, 2007]

"When we hear a report that the suicide rate for veterans is double that of the general population, and that the Department of Veterans Affairs isn't even keeping track of the problem, clearly we need to ask some serious questions," said Mitchell, who serves as chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. "Our veterans deserve better, and so do their families."

In Arizona, there were 241 veteran suicides in 2006 – an increase of 39 percent since 2003. Approximately one quarter of those who commit suicide in Arizona are veterans. [Source: Arizona Department of Health Services]

The CBS News report also found that

"veterans were more than twice as likely to commit suicide in 2005 than non-vets. (Veterans committed suicide at the rate of between 18.7 to 20.8 per 100,000, compared to other Americans, who did so at the rate of 8.9 per 100,000.) One age group stood out. Veterans aged 20 through 24, those who have served during the war on terror. They had the highest suicide rate among all veterans, estimated between two and four times higher than civilians the same age. (The suicide rate for non-veterans is 8.3 per 100,000, while the rate for veterans was found to be between 22.9 and 31.9 per 100,000.)" [Source: [CBS News](#) , Nov. 13, 2007]

A date for the hearing has not yet been set.