

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

What we know about the well-being and experiences of private contractors working in conflict environments

For the past decade, private contractors have been deployed extensively in conflict zones throughout the world, supporting U.S. and allied forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as foreign governments, nongovernmental organizations, and private businesses. These contractors experience many of the same traumas of war faced by military forces—combat stressors known to

have negative physical and mental health implications for armed forces personnel. Unlike military service members, however, many contractors don't have access to mental health resources before, during, and after deployment. So how are they coping with the after-effects of working in a war zone? RAND's survey of more than 650 contractors gives us a glimpse into how this "shadow force" is faring.

Exact numbers of private contractors employed internationally are unknown, but we do know that **private contractors employed by the Department of Defense at the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan outnumbered U.S. troops** deployed to the theater.



Number of contractors and service members employed by the Department of Defense



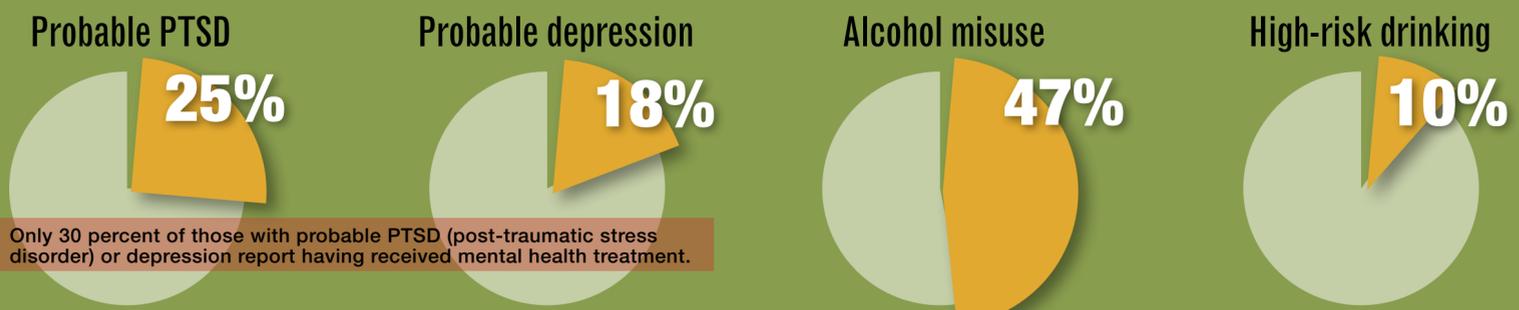
Data are from the Sié Chéou-Kang Center for International Security and Diplomacy.

CONTRACTORS REPORTING COMBAT EXPOSURE

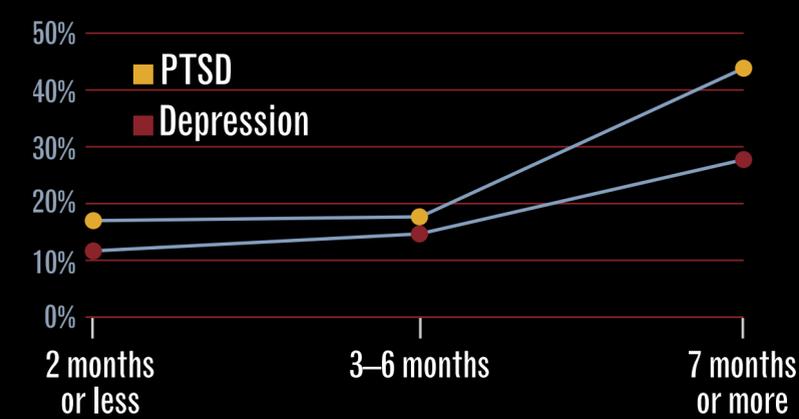
compared with veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom



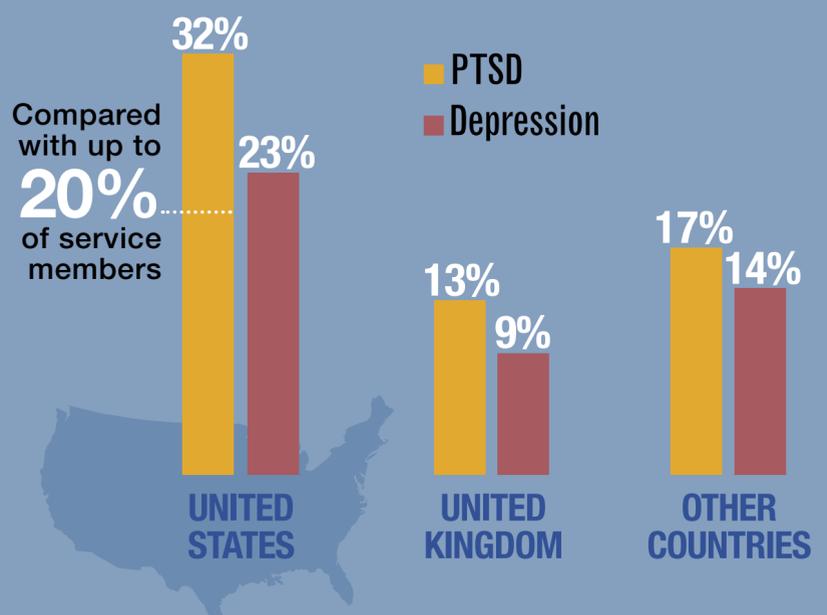
CONTRACTORS WITH PROBABLE MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE USE PROBLEMS



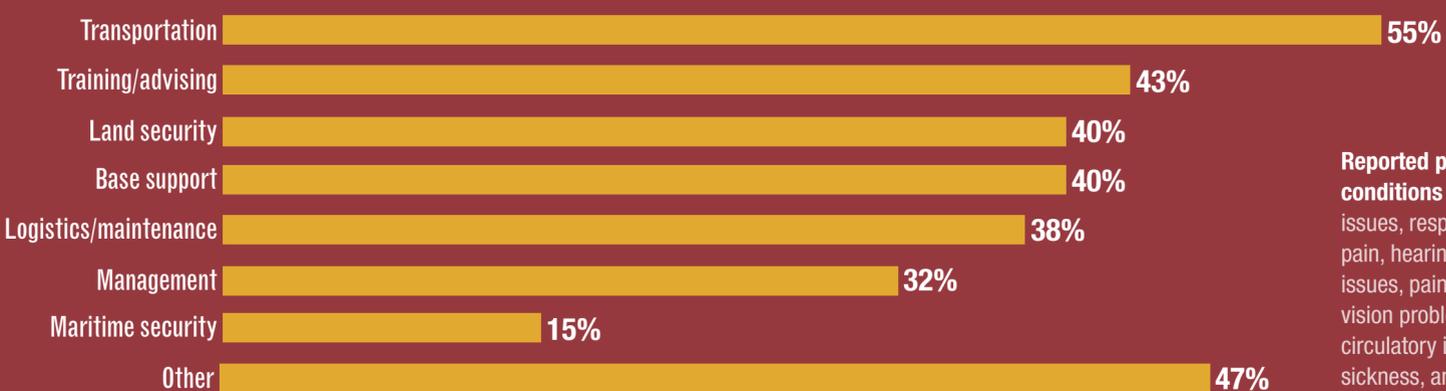
CONTRACTORS WITH PROBABLE PTSD OR DEPRESSION, BY LENGTH OF MOST RECENT DEPLOYMENT



CONTRACTORS WITH PROBABLE PTSD OR DEPRESSION, BY CITIZENSHIP



CONTRACTORS REPORTING PHYSICAL HEALTH CONDITIONS, BY SPECIALTY



Reported physical health conditions include orthopedic issues, respiratory issues, back pain, hearing problems, skin issues, pain, digestive problems, vision problems, cardiac/circulatory issues, infections/sickness, and fatigue/weakness.

For more information, see Molly Dunigan, Carrie M. Farmer, Rachel M. Burns, Alison Hawks, and Claude Messan Setodji, *Out of the Shadows: The Health and Well-Being of Private Contractors Working in Conflict Environments*, RAND Corporation, RR-420-RC (available at www.rand.org/t/rr420), 2013. This research brief describes work conducted as part of our RAND-Initiated Research program and was funded in part by the generosity of RAND's donors and by fees earned on client-funded research.

Infographic by Erin-Elizabeth Johnson and Dori Gordon Walker.

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