



Battleland

Where military intelligence is not a contradiction in terms

VETERANS

How Cops Can Best Deal With Vets

By [Elspeth Cameron Ritchie](#) | August 27, 2012 | [+](#)

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Soldiers, especially those back from combat, may require special handling by police in potentially-explosive situations.

How should we keep veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and/or hearing loss from getting shot from altercations with police?

Police are increasingly the first responders for responding to veterans in trouble, including those exhibiting disruptive behavior, barricade situations, and “suicide-by-cop” attempts.

I [wrote](#) last week on the Crisis Intervention Team International conference. Now I want to summarize some practical tips I gleaned at the session for law enforcement officers who may respond to a call for assistance.

The dispatchers who take the calls are also an important link. Their protocols should be reviewed to improve early identification of veterans to better guide the response.

Here are some tips for law enforcement who may find themselves dealing with veterans:

- Ask the person if he or she is a veteran, or has served in the military*
- If you have a veteran on the responding team, he or she may be the best to communicate.*
- Build rapport, by asking about what their “MOS” (military occupational specialty) was, where they trained, and where they served.*
- Treat them with respect and dignity.*
- Ask if they have a battle buddy or first sergeant that they would like to talk to.*
- Know that the veteran may have PTSD, TBI, hearing loss, or wounds causing pain or disability.*
- Assume he or she might have some difficulty processing information.*
- Speak slowly and clearly. Ask if he or she can hear you.*
- Assume patriotism, and consider appealing to that higher calling.*
- Do not denigrate the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.*
- Recent veterans are likely not interested in going to mental health services. But they may go to a chaplain or a Veteran Service Organization, such as the American Legion.*
- If there is the possibility of a firearm, assume the veteran knows how to use it. Be cautious.*

None of this means that veterans are any more likely to be violent than any one else. But veterans are a special breed, and deserve special consideration.

Thanks to Dan Abreu, Alison Lighthall, Dr. Ellen Crouse and others for their suggestions incorporated into the above.

Related Topics: [*Battleland*](#), [*Military Mental Health*](#), [*Troops*](#)

Read more: <http://nation.time.com/2012/08/27/how-cops-can-best-deal-with-vets/#ixzz24wtdTFD6>