



Monthly Report – May 2013 -- Vol. 1, No. 5

Tragic Losses

By Louis V. Lombardo

May 21, 2013 is the anniversary of the day Clara Barton, Nurse, Humanitarian, held the first meeting in 1881 of what was to become the American Red Cross.

On May 20th this week, the front page Washington Post carried an important article from Afghanistan by Kevin Sieff that is relevant to all people concerned with timely, optimal, emergency medical care.

Tragic Losses of Withdrawal from Afghan War

"KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — As soon as the Taliban bullet struck 24-year-old Afghan Sgt. Nazir Moradi's leg, the men in his unit began brainstorming a way to get him off the battlefield.

The roads were too dangerous for an army ambulance. The Afghan soldiers, in several calls to their commanders, repeated one plea: They needed a helicopter.

The Afghan air force didn't have any working aircraft available. The U.S. military, in the midst of drawing down its air support, denied a request for help. Instead, Moradi was carried for miles and eventually put in an unarmored ambulance impeded by rough terrain and the threat of roadside bombs.

By the time Moradi arrived at the Kandahar Regional Military Hospital, more than three hours away, he had bled to death from a minor wound. Hospital workers carried him to the morgue in a flag-draped coffin, the ritual they perform each time a soldier arrives too late.

"We kept waiting for a helicopter, either American or Afghan. But it never arrived," said Pvt. Morabuddin, Moradi's best friend. "He did not have to die."

Source: [Without U.S. helicopters, Afghans struggle to save wounded](#)

The tragedies in Afghanistan and the many crash victims in the U.S. each year that also do "not have to die" have something in common -- lack of timely, optimal, emergency medical care.

Tragic Losses from the Invisible War on Crash Deaths

There has been an invisible war going on at least since Nixon held secret, but taped, meetings with Henry Ford II and Lee Iacocca fighting against safety and auto pollution regulations in the White House on April 27, 1971.

Source: [Nixon And Detroit - Transcript | Rollover | FRONTLINE | PBS](#)
[0-www.pbs.org.library.lanecce.edu/wgbh/pages/.../nixon/nixon.html](#)

I have worked on pollution control and safety issues since 1966 and served in this Invisible War on the side of safety. In the 1970s I fought against gutting pollution standards. In the 1980s I fought the Reagan Administration's rescission of the air bag regulations and their cut of NHTSA staff by 300 workers -- one third the agency. Thirty years later NHTSA still operates at that reduced staffing level. As a NHTSA veteran I can use the word war without exaggeration. The 1983 Supreme Court also used the term war.

In 1983 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a rare 9 to 0 [decision](#) that NHTSA's rescission of its passive restraint standard had been arbitrary and capricious. In fact, the Court stated that: "For nearly a decade, the automobile industry waged the regulatory equivalent of war against the airbag and lost — the inflatable restraint was proved sufficiently effective."

Since 1978 when I joined NHTSA, the number of crash victims who died of injuries counted in the U.S. now exceeds 1,500,000 Americans. In addition, the number seriously injured is estimated at about 6 million Americans.

Since 1991, I have worked to improve care for crash victims at NHTSA until 2007, and subsequently as an actively retired citizen researcher. I find that the numbers of crash victims who die of their injuries in the U.S. each year are both tragic and not covered by the media as well as was done by the Post in Afghanistan.

In the spreadsheet of crash deaths by year, we find that NHTSA counted 32,315 crash victims died of their injuries in 2011 with emergency medical treatment that too often, was too little, too late. Of that number of crash fatalities there were 17,972 Americans (56%) that were "Not Taken to Hospital". The number of crash fatalities that year that died after transport to some facility for some level of medical treatment was 14,343 Americans (44%). See NHTSA data at "Killed in U.S. Crashes, 1978 – 2011" at www.careforcrashvictims.com

In 2012, crash fatalities increased to a daily rate of nearly 100 per day and 400 serious injuries.

NHTSA crash fatality statistics do not count the number of survivors who live with serious disabilities caused by brain injuries, spinal cord injuries (paraplegia and quadriplegia), amputations, burns, and disfigurements.

It is DOT policy to attribute dollar values to a statistical life lost and serious injuries. Latest DOT value is \$9.1 million per life. Applying those figures to the current rates of American crash losses of life and serious injuries amount to about \$1 Billion per day.

Lessons from Afghanistan

During President Obama's first term, 132,250 Americans died of crash injuries in the U.S.A. -- more than died in the Afghanistan, Iraq, and Viet Nam wars combined.

As I wrote in my January 2013 Report, "3 Steps to Reduce Crash Deaths" President Obama needs to apply the lessons learned in Afghanistan right here in America.

"Imagine a goal that the nation will achieve Golden Hour medevac for serious crashes of 1 hour or less by the year 2020 here in the U.S.A. President Obama's Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has already set and met that goal in Afghanistan.

"JIM LEHRER: Mr. Secretary, much has been written and said about your last four and a half years as secretary of defense. And a lot of people have been assessing your performance. What do you think of the way you've performed as secretary of state the last - secretary of defense the last four and half years?"

*ROBERT GATES: "I will say that I think that the thing I'm proudest of is what I've been able to do for our troops, giving them these heavily armored vehicles, these Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles; **giving them one-hour medevac or less in Afghanistan...** trying to do whatever was necessary to help them accomplish their mission and come home safely." (Emphasis added)" Source: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june11/gates_06-23.html*

We can do this in America. NHTSA published a paper in 2005 on what we can do to improve emergency care for crash victims. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/urgency.php>"

But as can be seen by recent reports the President seems to have lost his "juice." And despite the gun violence tragedies -- legislation has stalled. Thus citizens need to arm themselves with facts and reasons to gain more bipartisan support for helping crash victims.

Citizen Action Tool

To help citizens gain congressional support for doing more to help crash victims receive timely, optimal, emergency medical care I offer a free new tool.

We just published a new **Crash Death Mapping Tool** for citizens to easily learn how many people have died of crash injuries in their 2013 Congressional District over the past decade. This enables citizens to show their representatives, with just a

click, the magnitude of the problem of crash deaths in their District. The **Crash Death Mapping Tool** is available at www.careforcrashvictims.com under U.S.A. Crash Death Clock. ESRI also published the tool under the title Mapping Traffic Fatalities by Congressional District at www.storymaps.esri.com/partnerstories/

I hope this tool helps us reduce the number of tragedies of people who "do not have to die" because the emergency medical care they receive is too little, too late. When crash victims are seriously hurt, we have a moral obligation to care enough to send the very best rescue resources -- in time to save lives and prevent disabilities.

Historically we are in the 114th year U.S. crash deaths and serious injuries:

- * More than 3.5 million Americans have died of crash injuries in the U.S.
- * An estimated 12 million Americans have suffered serious crash injuries in the U.S.
- * Using current U.S. DOT value of \$9.1 million per life lost, the financial costs would total an estimated \$31 Trillion. See attached DOT Policy.
- * Currently about 100 Americans lose their lives to crash injuries on an average day.
- * Currently each day about 56 Americans, more than half of all crash fatalities, die of crash injuries without EMS transport to **any** facility for medical treatment.

So the President is right that to save more Americans first responders need more resources -- not less. First responders also need better policies from the President.

Think of a President with the courage of a John F. Kennedy. JFK challenged the nation to put mankind on the moon and bring them back alive within a decade — using 1960's technology — and we succeeded.

Imagine a President challenging the nation to create a transportation system where people can venture forth and return alive — using 21st century technology.

Safety researchers around the world believe this is a worthy goal that we should aim to achieve in a decade.

In a recent article I offered three policy steps available to the President that can improve care for crash victims. See my blog "3 Steps to Reduce Crash Deaths".

1. Set a goal to be achieved by the year 2020 of one-hour medevac or less for victims in serious crashes in the U.S. as we have already achieved in Afghanistan. Bring crash victims home alive.
2. Count serious crash injuries and measure their consequences.

3. Assign VP Biden the task -- similar to the one just given on gun violence -- to recommend actions on reducing crash deaths and disabilities.

By 2007, the percentage of fatal crash sites covered by air medical rescue services had increased to 61%. Source:

http://www.adamsairmed.org/pubs/RW_Coverage_Density_Poster_AMTC08.pdf

Maps and data on crash fatality rates by State and air medical coverage areas are at

http://www.adamsairmed.org/public_site.html

In President Obama's first term, more Americans died of crash injuries than died in the Afghanistan, Iraq, and Viet Nam wars **combined**. Question: If the President does not take a leadership role now, will he preside over a greater number of deaths by crash injuries in his second term? Since we appear to be slowly coming out of the Great Recession, we saw crash deaths begin rising in 2012. So it is predictable that Presidential leadership is needed now to prevent the number of crash tragedies in his second term from being worse than in his first term when about 132,250 Americans died.

We can and must do better at protecting motorists from crash violence -- and yes we can.