

## BOOK REVIEW

### What Have We Done

#### *The Moral Injury of Our Longest Wars*

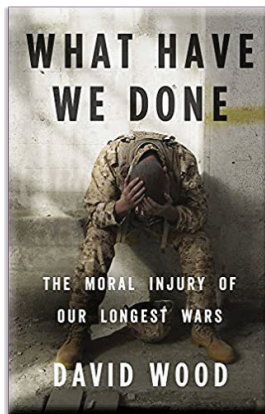
Wood D. *What Have We Done: The Moral Injury of Our Longest Wars*. Little, Brown Spark (November 1, 2016); 304 pages; ISBN 978-0-316-26414-3

Reviewed by Scott P. Graverson, PhD

In recent years, US military services have worked hard to remove the stigma of mental illness from our troops who have experienced emotional trauma. Much of the discussion surrounding the trauma experienced by our Soldiers is about posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "Post-traumatic stress disorder is biology; it's the body's involuntary physical reaction as we relive the intense fear of a life-threatening event and the scalding emotional responses that follow: terror and a debilitating sense of helplessness."<sup>p15</sup> While moral injury and PTSD can occur at the same time, moral injury occurs "when a person has time to reflect on a traumatic experience,"<sup>p16</sup> and our wartime actions conflict with our moral upbringing. "A moral injury is a self-accusation, prompted by something you did, something you failed to do, or something done to you."<sup>p18</sup>

Every society and religion has tenets that teach us that killing is wrong and that killing a child is especially heinous; however, in a combat zone, killing enemy combatants is required for the survival of every team member. The reaction to defend one's comrades must be instantaneous; failing to do so will likely end in tragedy. The moral injury to our combat troops compounds

when the enemy sends a young child, say 12 years old or younger, out with an RPG, and they aim that weapon at a convoy. The Soldier who disengages that child's life now must deal with the potential reality of returning home to their young child and wondering how they can be a good parent.



David Wood is a veteran war reporter who won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting on wounded warriors. A Quaker by birthright, David is a pacifist and was granted conscientious objector status during the Vietnam war; however, his sense of duty to this country led him to a career as a journalist embedded with combat teams, first in Vietnam and later reporting on conflicts in Europe, Africa, Asia, Central America, culminating in Iraq

and Afghanistan. As a reporter for the Huffington Post, David embedded with the First Battalion, Sixth Marine Regiment (the 1/6), Charlie Company, Second Platoon in Afghanistan, where he became more than just an embedded reporter; he became part of the unit and continued that fraternity well past the deployment. Through his research for the book, David met with numerous Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who reluctantly shared parts of their stories for publication.



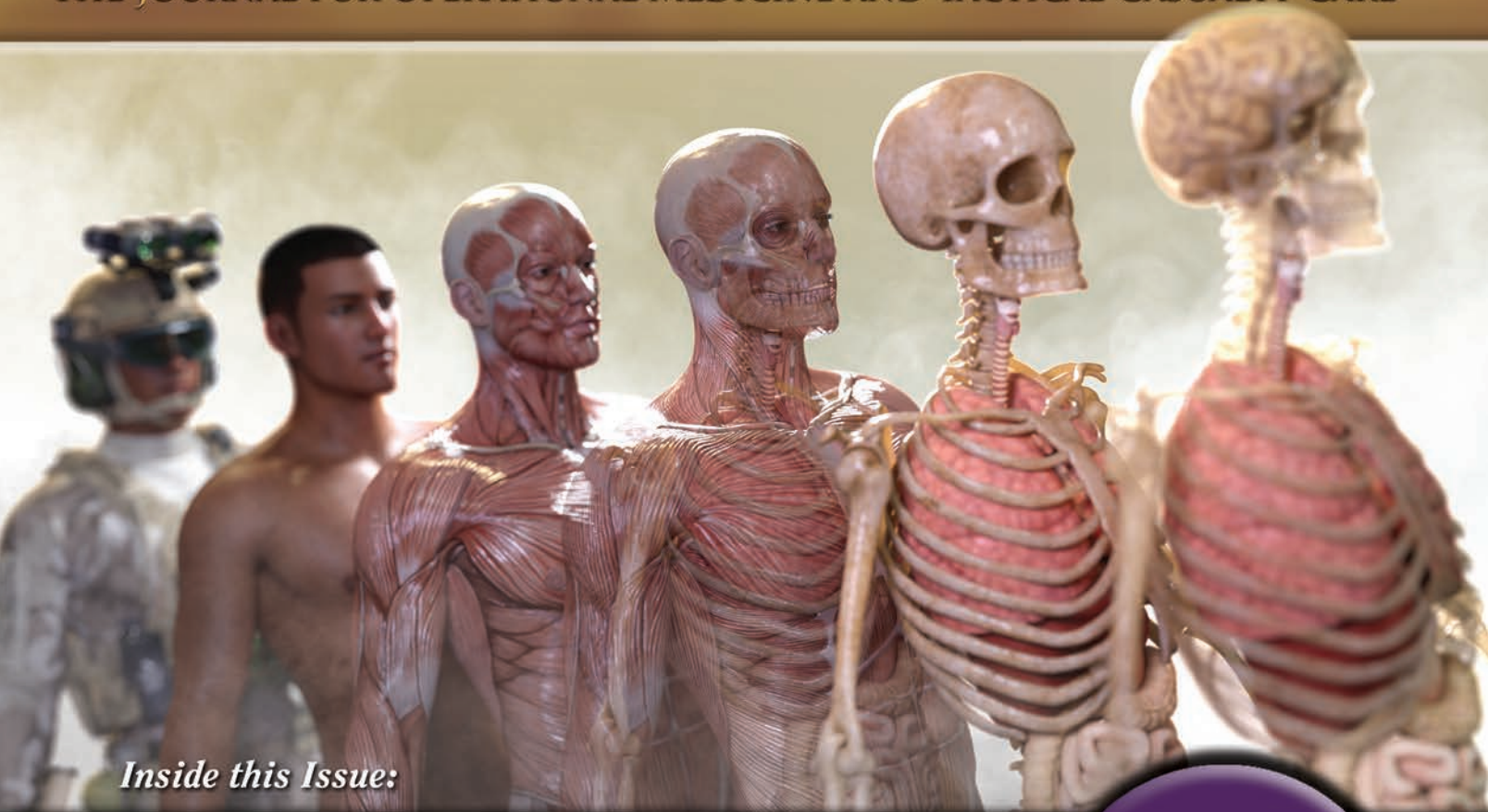
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Summer 2022  
Volume 22, Edition 2

THE JOURNAL FOR OPERATIONAL MEDICINE AND TACTICAL CASUALTY CARE



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