

Following the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there has been a well-documented surge in the number of returning veterans joining outlaw motorcycle clubs (OMCs). OMCs such as the Outlaws and Hells Angels have expanded and new gangs have formed, primarily fueled by disaffected veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.<sup>1</sup> The uptick in OMC membership by veterans is not a new trend; motorcycle gang membership spiked sharply following both WWII and the Vietnam War. However, it was not a well-known issue until the deadly Waco shootings in 2015, when nine bikers were killed in a deadly clash due to the effects of territorial and membership expansion among two major gangs.<sup>2</sup> This front-page story brought OMCs to a new light, including their members - some of whom were veterans.

The allure of outlaw motorcycle gangs to veterans stems from a deep and often complex psychological background. These gangs facilitate coping for disenfranchised veterans and help reconcile the dichotomy between war and civil society; veterans are able to find refuge in outlaw motorcycle gangs due to the feelings of camaraderie, hierarchical organizational structure, and the clearly defined code of conduct that resembles the similar organizational attributes experienced during their military service. This composition provides an overview and analysis of why, how, when, and where certain populations of veterans began to gravitate towards and formulate motorcycle clubs in the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>1</sup> (The Week Staff)

<sup>2</sup> (Connor)

## **America's Disenfranchised Veterans**

Returning from war has never been easy. Even for veterans who have not suffered physical injury, the mental toll can be devastating. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century physicians referred to it as “shell shock,” a term that was replaced during WWII by the equally vague “battle fatigue.” It was only in 1980 that the term “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” (PTSD) was added to the American Psychiatric Association (APA)’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).<sup>3</sup> Of the 2.7 million veterans who served in Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF), an estimated 11-20% have PTSD<sup>4</sup>; an estimated half are receiving treatment, well below the VA’s targeted rate of care of 67% of PTSD-afflicted veterans receiving treatment.<sup>5</sup>

Returning veterans also face a variety of issues including higher-than-average rates of homelessness, drug abuse, and suicide. Veterans comprise less than 10% of the population but account for 20% of suicides, with an average of 22 suicide deaths per day, a national epidemic. Roughly one-tenth of homeless people are veterans, the majority of whom suffer from behavioral health and/or substance use disorders.<sup>6</sup> While the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) have spent a combined \$3.3 billion on treating behavioral disorders in veterans and active service members, a recent report by the Institute of Medicine found their programs woefully lacking: the DoD’s was described as “ad hoc, incremental, and crisis-driven, with little

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<sup>3</sup> (Matthew J. Friedman)

<sup>4</sup> (Jaimie L. Gradus)

<sup>5</sup> (Associated Press)

<sup>6</sup> (SAMHSA)

planning devoted to the development of a long-range approach to obtaining desired outcomes."<sup>7</sup>

Regardless of a PTSD, behavioral health, or substance use diagnosis, reintegrating into society is frequently difficult for veterans. One of the consequences of reentry into civilian life is an identity crisis. The military world places a heavy emphasis on removing the civilian identity and replacing it with a military one, initiated typically during boot camp. The new military identity has drastically different ideals such as honor, commitment, obedience, and sacrifice. The military identity changes not only values but basic psychology. Emotions are effectively switched off in favor of depersonalized actions. This is commonly referred to as the "civil-military cultural gap." When former soldiers reintegrate into society, they must suddenly assume a new civilian identity with completely different values that often contradict past actions in their service record, such as killing in the line of duty. This conflict of identity can exacerbate underlying behavioral health issues, leading to anger, depression, and severe mental stress.<sup>8</sup>

Another stressor that veterans face upon reentry into civilian life is lack of structure. The military provides almost every life detail to soldiers- dictating what they wear, when they eat, and what they do. Due to the military values of teamwork and commitment, extremely close bonds are often formed between soldiers in a unit. As one veteran wrote, "Someone was always there for me. Checking on me. Making sure I was good to go. All of us were doing this for one another."<sup>9</sup> Upon leaving the armed services, he wrote, "Gone,

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<sup>7</sup> (Associated Press)

<sup>8</sup> (Duca)

<sup>9</sup> (Stajura)

suddenly, is the cohesive structure that existed to take care of you. Gone is that strong sense of social security. Gone is the sense that, wherever you go, you know where you fit. Gone are the familiar cultural norms. Gone are your friends from your ready-made peer group, who are just as invested in your success as you are in theirs.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs and Culture**

While this paper focuses on veteran presence in OMCs, a majority of military- and veteran-only motorcycle clubs are comprised of law-abiding citizens who enjoy the companionship of a club and the excitement of a good ride. MCs such as the Warrior Brotherhood, The Green Knights, and The Raging Goats focus on mentorship, charity, and the fun of riding a motorcycle. Annual rides such as Rolling Thunder, held in Washington, D.C. each Memorial Day, promote awareness of ongoing POW/MIA issues and do not promote committing crimes. Military MCs count high-ranking officers among its ranks, including Air Force General Phillip Breedlove, former commander of United States and NATO forces in Europe.<sup>11</sup>

However, the FBI estimates that there are 44,000 “outlaw bikers” in the United States who belong to OMCs.<sup>12</sup> There are hundreds of different outlaw MCs, but the majority of outlaw bikers belong to the “Big Six”: Mongols, Bandidos, Vagos, Hell’s Angels, Outlaws, and Pagans.<sup>13</sup> Other major clubs include the Warlocks, Buffalo Soldiers, and Highwaymen.

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<sup>10</sup> (Stajura)

<sup>11</sup> (Anderson)

<sup>12</sup> (The Week Staff)

<sup>13</sup> (ATF)

The OMCs aren't "just tattooed long-haired guys who like to ride motorcycles," according to the Midwest Outlaw Motorcycle Gang Investigators Association member Steve Cook. "They are long-haired tattooed guys who ride motorcycles and sell a hell of a lot of methamphetamine and murder people and steal motorcycles and extort people."<sup>14</sup>

The culture of OMC's directly appeals to returning veterans with its emphasis on camaraderie, organization, and a clearly defined code of conduct. Traditional military identity values such as honor, sacrifice, and hierarchy are often used to describe OMCs. Government witness and infiltrator Charles Falco once commented that biker gangs were "structured like the military and have a strict set of rules."<sup>15</sup> A former Bandidos member explained the gang's appeal by stating that it provided members with "a sense of family they never found during their childhood."<sup>16</sup>

Motorcycle clubs in general, even those that are not "outlaw," provide a brotherhood that veterans may have sorely missed since leaving the service. Similar to the military - where small units of soldiers face intense situations together - the mentality is typically "all for one and one for all."<sup>17</sup> This camaraderie can substitute for close ties in a military unit. According to former Marine Sgt. Derek Schwartz, who joined the Marines-only Leathernecks Motorcycle Club after twelve years of combat duty, he said, "I was amazed — it felt like family. Everyone just takes care of each other. It's a brotherhood very similar to

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<sup>14</sup> (The Week Staff)

<sup>15</sup> (The Week Staff)

<sup>16</sup> (The Week Staff)

<sup>17</sup> (Anand N. Bosmia)

the one in the Marines. It's one of the most therapeutic things I've experienced outside of active duty."<sup>18</sup>

MCs also provide returning veterans with a tight structure and hierarchy that must be obeyed, similar to that in the military. The common perception of the outlaw motorcycle gang is one of wild recklessness and constant danger, like a *Mad Max*-style anarchy. But former OMC infiltrator Charles Falco referred to their daily lives as "boring." The OMCs had "strictly defined chains of command and lines of communication," with democratically elected secretaries and treasurers who had to keep meeting notes and detailed records. Basic maintenance tasks- such as mowing the club yard, cleaning the bathroom, and selling raffle tickets- consumed much of the OMC members' time and energy.<sup>19</sup> The structure and hierarchy of the motorcycle club, as well as the majority of time spent doing menial tasks, is similar to that of the soldier. This trait makes motorcycle clubs compelling for veterans who are used to hierarchy and structure.

Code of conduct is clearly defined in OMCs, with an emphasis placed on power, loyalty, and respect. A manual for emergency physician medical treatment of injured outlaw bikers reads, "Gang members have an overarching requirement for respect and for saving face in all encounters and from every individual with whom they come in contact. The gang member will not hesitate to injure or kill someone if he believes that person has shown disrespect to himself or his gang."<sup>20</sup> This type of loyalty can also be found within

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<sup>18</sup> (Anderson)

<sup>19</sup> (Dulaney, What you don't know about motorcycle clubs)

<sup>20</sup> (Anand N. Bosmia)

military units, as both the military and outlaw motorcycle clubs place a great emphasis on the collective welfare of the group as opposed to the preferences of the individual.

### **Origins of the Motorcycle Club**

The origin of motorcycle clubs, both outlaw and conventional, sprang out of the expansion of motorcycle manufacturing in the United States. Researcher William L. Dulaney, who specializes in researching OMCs as a professor at the U.S. Air Force Air Command & Staff College, provides a detailed overview of the trajectory of motorcycle clubs from historical origins to modern day in his dissertation, *A Brief History of Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs*. As motorcycles became a reliable and enhanced mode of transportation far superior to the capabilities of standard non-motorized bicycles, adoption and usage of motorcycles began to spread during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This expansion was aided by motorcycle racing and newly established motorcycle clubs.<sup>21</sup>

One of the first motorcycle clubs was established in New York City in 1903.<sup>22</sup> The mandate for this club was to ensure the various levels of government facilitated safe operating conditions for motorcycle drives on roadways. Because motorized bicycles were a novel presence on roadways during that era, accommodations were not fully integrated into traffic rules and highway infrastructure until the advent of motorcycle clubs.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> (Dulaney, *A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs*)

<sup>22</sup> (American Motorcyclist Association)

<sup>23</sup> (Dulaney, *A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs*)

Dulaney calls this earliest phase in the development of motorcycle clubs the Preformative Period, which lasted from 1901 to 1944. In *A Brief History of Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs*, Dulaney provides evidence of the emergence of an enduring OMC that exists up until the current day:

Perhaps the first emergence of an enduring motorcycle club... appeared in 1936. This group was called the McCook Outlaws, hailing from Cook County, Illinois, which encompasses the city of Chicago. The McCook Outlaws were later to become the Chicago Outlaws, now known as the Outlaws Motorcycle Club. According to a 26-year member of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club, older members of his organization related to him that they congregated for the purposes of long distance touring—which was quite an adventure aboard a foot-operated clutch and hand-shifted motorcycle traveling largely on unpaved dirt roads—and racing, which included hill-climbing, flat quarter-mile dirt tracks, and oval wooden board tracks. A secondary but enduring biker pastime was the massive consumption of alcohol and general good-natured debauchery.<sup>24</sup>

Dulaney's text outlines the original mandate of this particular outlaw club, which was predicated upon the thrill of the "ride" and the pursuit of good times.<sup>25</sup> In appraising the dichotomy between the culture of the original conventional clubs, which stressed road safety, against the culture of the first outlaw clubs, it is apparent that the outlaw clubs—even from their embryonic beginnings—represented an appealing culture set apart from the norm. This comparison is similar to that of military culture in relation to culture in civil

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<sup>24</sup> (Dulaney, *A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs*)

<sup>25</sup> (Dulaney, *A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs*)

society, with one group following different values and priorities than another while inhabiting the same space.

### **The Formation of OMCs**

The next phase in the development of motorcycle clubs is described by Dulaney as the Formative Period. This era, which lasted from 1945 to 1957, commenced with the convergence of disparate dynamics that developed during the Preformative Period. The key additional ingredient and ultimate catalyst for the Formative Period was the return of thousands of veterans from World War II (WWII) during this period. These battle-hardened troops, in most cases, returned to familiar homes and jobs; however, they had changed and were now the product of the wartime experience. The monotony of life back in the U.S. presented a challenge for many of these veterans, who craved a certain amount of dynamism in their lives after experiencing the indelible impact of combat. They also craved the types of fraternal bonds generated within military units, where a strong brotherhood of camaraderie is formed over time.<sup>26</sup>

Much of what these soldiers experienced during WWII and their ensuing return to conventional society would be referred to today as PTSD, but was then not a clinical diagnosis.<sup>27</sup> Several studies conducted since the Gulf War indicate that PTSD can be mitigated through a variety of methods, one being engaging in the precise types of social

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<sup>26</sup> (Dulaney, A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs)

<sup>27</sup> (Matthew J. Friedman)

and recreational activities present within motorcycle clubs.<sup>28</sup> It is no wonder then that after witnessing the horrors of WWII- a war that included atrocities such as the Holocaust and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki- that many veterans chose motorcycle clubs as a type of coping mechanism for post-traumatic stress.

One of the most prominent motorcycle clubs to emerge during this era was the notorious Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC), founded in 1948 in California.<sup>29</sup> This club is oftentimes seen as the signature example of the transition from military to motorcycle club, but not in the most flattering of ways; legend dictates that the HAMC was founded by veterans who returned from WWII who wanted to continue the raucous, live-life-to-the-limits lifestyle practiced by some of the veterans while in Europe during WWII.<sup>30</sup> As described in the official history of the HAMC:

The lineage between HAMC and a military organization is that Arvid Olsen; "Flying Tigers" Hells Angels squadron gave the idea of the name to the actual founder of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club, in Fontana, California. The selection of our colors, red on white, is a result of the association of Olsen with the HAMC founders, like the insignia of the 3Ps "Hells Angels". The insignia of the HAMC, our copyrighted Death Head can also be traced to two variant insignia designs, the 85th Fighter Squadron and the 552nd Medium Bomber Squadron.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> (Dulaney, A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs)

<sup>29</sup> (Hells Angels)

<sup>30</sup> (Dulaney, A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs)

<sup>31</sup> (Hells Angels)

The connection to the military is undeniable and rooted in the intensity of combat and acknowledgement of how finite life is by the WWII veterans and charter HAMC members. It is unclear what percentage of original HAMC members were veterans from WWII, but the lasting impact of military symbols on one of the world's most enduring OMCs is a testament to the military and motorcycle club convergence.<sup>32</sup>

During this boom of MC foundation and membership, the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) adopted the 1%-99% ratio of criminal MC members relative to good, law-abiding citizens. This was brought about by a staged article in *Life* magazine describing the debauchery of motorcyclists in 1947 in a recurring section of the magazine titled "The Week's Events." Published in one of the nation's leading periodicals, the article was accompanied by a photograph of a drunk-looking motorcyclist on a Harley-Davidson Knucklehead festooned with beer bottles. Although the image was reportedly staged, it was accompanied by the caption "Cyclist's Holiday: He and Friends Terrorize Town."<sup>33</sup>

This depiction caused the AMA to describe 99% of their members as law-abiding citizens, but it was too late; the damage had been done to motorcycling's reputation. Once considered a family-friendly sport, motorcycling was now the domain of the bad boys. This picture catalyzed the popular perception of motorcycle clubs as being inherently wild and criminal in nature, and served to formally delineate the burgeoning 1% OMCs from the conventional clubs. The stance by the conventional to castigate the perceived 1% seemed to backfire as the OMCs embraced the 1% nomenclature as a badge of honor. The "One

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<sup>32</sup> (Hells Angels)

<sup>33</sup> (Dulaney, A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs)

Percenter” nomenclature has since become one of the calling cards of the OMCs and is universally seen as a reflection of a lifestyle on the fringes of society.<sup>34</sup>

### **Trajectory of Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs**

The Transformative Period in motorcycle clubs, as described by Dulaney, ran from approximately 1958 to the beginning of the War on Terror. This period saw the spread of motorcycle clubs beyond California, the origin state of the motorcycle club movement. The spread of clubs did not automatically imply they were necessarily outlaw clubs; however, the outlaws were among those within this California diaspora. Many of these clubs became popular amongst certain strata of society during the exit from the halcyon days of the fifties into the torrential times of the sixties.<sup>35</sup>

The “bad boy” image of outlaw motorcycle clubs was further reinforced in 1969 at Altamont Raceway Park, where a group of Hells Angels- who had been asked to serve as security guards for the event- stabbed a teenager to death and beat many of the attendees. Paid in beer and required to monitor a crowd of 300,000, the Hells Angels also managed to knock out several of the musicians as well. Called “Rock’s Darkest Day” by music journalist Joel Selvin, the incident brought OMCs into the national spotlight.<sup>36</sup>

“Motorcycle Mike” D., a longtime conventional MC member who has had extensive experience with OMCs, recalls that day as a turning point. “The Rolling Stones incident

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<sup>34</sup> (Dulaney, A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs)

<sup>35</sup> (Dulaney, A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs)

<sup>36</sup> (Tribune News Service)

really elevated the Hell's Angels. It glorified the motorcycle gangs. All of a sudden, everyone wanted to join."<sup>37</sup>

As the motorcycle clubs, both conventional and outlaw, gained footholds and popularity throughout the United States in the sixties, the Vietnam War served as a catalyst for a new influx of veterans interested in joining the movement. As mentioned previously, the disenfranchisement of returning soldiers was a common dynamic in America during previous conflicts. Prior to acknowledgement of war-induced conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, the Darwinian law of survival of the fittest was the law of the land; those who experienced difficulty transitioning back to conventional life were seen as broken, unfixable, and disposable.<sup>38</sup>

As draftees returned from their one-year commitment in the Vietnam War, a war with a suspect purpose to many, they brought a sense of alienation and forced military service back to the United States. The experiences of war for peers in their generation, especially those who were exempted from serving due to luck, college waivers, or influence, alienated these returning veterans further. As the veterans realized the rude awakening of returning back to their homeland after fighting in a futile conflict overseas, the lure of the motorcycle clubs was seen as a profound departure from conventional society and a place where they could heal and relate with fellow veterans.<sup>39</sup>

The years directly following the Vietnam War saw a major surge in motorcycle club membership, especially by disaffected returning war fighters. OMCs such as the Bandidos,

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<sup>37</sup> (D.)

<sup>38</sup> (Dulaney, A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs)

<sup>39</sup> (Dulaney, A Brief History of "Outlaw" Motorcycle Clubs)

Mongols, and Devils Disciples got their start during this time period.<sup>40</sup> Other conventional MCs, such as the Vietnam Vets Motorcycle Club, were formed “as a way for veterans of the Vietnam Era to share in the camaraderie that they had experienced in the military but been unable to find in the civilian world,” according to the club’s mission statement.<sup>41</sup>

### **Surge in OMC Membership Post-Iraq and Afghanistan Wars**

The next period in the evolution of motorcycle clubs, which extends from the end of the Transformative Period to the current date, includes a new wave of veterans returning from war. Similar to the two previous spikes in OMC enrollment following WWII and Vietnam, motorcycle clubs- both conventional and outlaw- provide “venues to continue service to their communities and country; opportunities to engage with people of similar, unique experiences; and contexts in which the words 'Duty, Honor, Country' take center stage in all they do over the course of a lifetime,” according to MC expert and Hell on Wheels President William Dulaney. MCs often provide “much needed stopgap services for veterans with PTSD, very often stepping in where government services do not or cannot reach those most in crisis.”<sup>42</sup>

However, there is another factor spurring veterans to join outlaw MCs: a badly damaged economy that challenges the status quo pursuits which law-abiding citizens elect to pursue. Many veterans returned home from multiple deployments to find that there were few jobs, and even fewer high-paying jobs, available for workers without college

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<sup>40</sup> (Anderson)

<sup>41</sup> (Vietnam Vets Motorcycle Club)

<sup>42</sup> (Anderson)

degrees. This economic slump was due to the 2008 global financial collapse and a slow recovery period that saw little rise in the minimum wage or in the amount of low-skilled labor jobs available to returning veterans without higher education.

The Department of Veterans Affairs lists preparing to reenter the workforce as a major stressor for returning veterans that can contribute to behavioral health issues. “A Veteran may have never looked for, applied for, or interviewed for a civilian job, especially if he or she had a career in the military. . . A Veteran will have to determine how to translate his or her military skills and duties into civilian terms and create a resume. . . A Veteran may have never created a resume.”<sup>43</sup> More than during the previous two spikes in OMC growth, economic factors play a role more than ever in veterans’ pursuit of economic fulfillment through an outlaw club affiliation. As Michael D., a conventional motorcycle club member and someone well acquainted with Hell’s Angels dynamics, articulates regarding recent veterans who pursue club membership: “Veterans are joining the clubs due to the current economic climate and challenges that they face in providing for themselves and their families.”<sup>44</sup>

Outlaw motorcycle clubs, for their part, are eager to recruit veterans - especially combat veterans of Special Forces. According to former OMC infiltrator and ATF informant Charles Falco, combat veterans are “trained, they’re great at conducting war and they have the ability to access weapons.”<sup>45</sup> Many veterans end up becoming enforcers or tough guys

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<sup>43</sup> (Department of Veterans Affairs)

<sup>44</sup> (D.)

<sup>45</sup> (Connor)

due to their military training.<sup>46</sup> Clubs such as the Highwaymen and Warlocks have even gone so far as to create clothing with OMC colors for active duty service members deployed overseas, leading to a troubling conflict: to whom do these military and OMC members truly owe their loyalty?<sup>47</sup>

Despite the demand for veterans, it's not easy to join an OMC. Longtime MC member and Hells Angels expert "Motorcycle Mike" (Michael D.) of New Jersey details the process: "For most of the legacy clubs, the 'prospects' must pay their dues in support clubs until being voted into one of the mother clubs, such as the Hell's Angels or the Buffalo Soldiers." The prospecting process can last "anywhere from 18 months to five years to never." The vetting process is intense, even for battle-hardened combat veterans coming from veteran clubs. "They're like the mafia or secret society," Michael D. explains. "You won't know what they do."<sup>48</sup>

The recent spike in veteran and law enforcement enrollment in OMCs has recently concerned the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATFE). They published a report in 2014 that detailed how military and police MCs were "beginning to inherit [OMC] traits and mannerisms." According to the report, the line between the outlaw and conventional MCs is starting to become blurred. "In Virginia, [conventional] clubs such as the Infidels, U.S. Military Vets and EOD MC have been witnessed by [law enforcement] riding side by side with the Pagans and Hells Angels in

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<sup>46</sup> (D.)

<sup>47</sup> (Connor)

<sup>48</sup> (D.)

separate events.”<sup>49</sup> The report went so far as to claim that “the [OMC] community continues to spread its tentacles through all facets of government,” including defense contracting personnel and first responders.<sup>50</sup>

The adoption of OMC insignia tradition by conventional veteran and military MCs such as the Iron Order has caused a number of violent clashes between the two groups. The Iron Order- a fast-growing conventional MC comprised of mostly law enforcement, veterans, active-duty military, and government employees- adopted the traditional three-piece OMC patch with colors and a State bottom rocker. However, the bottom rocker signifies claim to territory, which has brought the Iron Order into conflict with OMCs such as the Bandidos, Pagans, and Iron Horsemen. This has led several military commanders to prohibit their troops from involvement in the Iron Order due to its confrontations with outlaw groups.<sup>51</sup> However, punishment for participation in the Iron Order is up to the discretion of individual military leaders; participation in OMCs has not been explicitly banned either by the Department of Defense.<sup>52</sup>

A number of veterans and active-duty military personnel have been caught up in OMC-related violence over the past decade. A few have been involved in weapons seizures, and three Army soldiers- including a three-tour Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran- were sentenced to prison after murdering an unarmed man on behalf of the Sin City Disciples. The report stated, “Even though only a small percentage of active-duty military personnel, DoD (Department of Defense) employees and contractors have been involved in the

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<sup>49</sup> (Anderson)

<sup>50</sup> (Connor)

<sup>51</sup> (Anderson)

<sup>52</sup> (Connor)

shootings or violent acts against adversaries, they belong to and/or (are) associated with [OMCs] and motorcycle clubs that are pulling the triggers.”<sup>53</sup>

But many veterans say that they’re being unfairly targeted as criminals just for belonging to motorcycle clubs that were in the wrong place at the wrong time. The 2014 Waco gathering- which ended in a violent shootout leaving nine dead, 20 wounded, and 170 arrested- was attended by members of the Marines-only Leatherneck MC and was originally supposed to be a legislative meeting between clubs. According to William Dulaney, the “honorable veterans” detained at Waco were being held on false charges. “Suffice it to say that I predict the 'cut and dried' narrative that law enforcement has promulgated will be destroyed once evidence is released. . . . It seems clear that many of those arrested in Waco are victims of very serious civil rights violations— so serious that even once they are cleared of charges, their lives will still never be the same. And to think that those very people have worn the cloth of the nation in defense of those civil liberties?”<sup>54</sup>

But despite the 2014 Waco shootout, 1969 Rolling Stones concert, and 1947 staged photograph, outlaw motorcycle clubs still hold a strong allure for veterans. Negative press and bad-boy reputations have not diminished the appeal of structure, hierarchy, and camaraderie that veterans cherish from their military service years. Furthermore, a weak economy for low-skilled jobs has made OMCs a lucrative way to earn a living for veterans without higher education or relevant civilian job skills and training. Whether as a stopgap measure for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or a welcome reinforcement of military-type

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<sup>53</sup> (Connor)

<sup>54</sup> (Anderson)

identity, veterans returning to the civilian world frequently find refuge in outlaw motorcycle clubs.

*I, Alan J. Murphy, do hereby certify that the Georgetown Honor Code was adhered to during the drafting of this paper.*

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