

## OUR CARE-NOTHING-FOR-VETS PRESIDENT

It's been a month since we learned up to 40 of more than 1,400 veterans on a secret waiting list at the VA hospital in Phoenix may have died while waiting up to a year for treatment.

Since that CNN broadcast April 23, doctored records and preventable deaths have been reported at 25 other VA facilities.

It wasn't until yesterday (5/21) that President Barack Hussein Obama spoke in public about the scandal.

He'd learned of it from news reports, said White House Press Secretary Jay Carney. That's also how the president learned the [Obamacare web site](#) was a mess; the [IRS was targeting conservative groups](#); security at the Benghazi consulate was lax, aides said.

Evidently no one who works for Mr. Obama ever tells him anything.

"I will not stand for it," Mr. Obama said. "There must be consequences."

But he took no steps either to alleviate the suffering of veterans, or to punish those who've neglected them.

The man in charge of the VA while this was going on is "a fine public servant," the president said.

Mr. Obama's praise for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs gobsnacked Georgia [Rep. David Scott](#), who said Eric Shinseki should be fired.

"Under his watch at my own hospital in Atlanta, four of our soldiers committed suicide, and the inspector general of the VA laid the blame directly at the foot of the VA administration," Rep. Scott stormed in a fiery speech on the House floor.

All criticism of Mr. Obama is rooted in racism and motivated by politics, some liberals say. Rep. Scott is a Democrat. He's also black.

No federal agency is less likely to become a partisan football than the VA. No matter how they feel about spending for defense or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Americans think vets should get the health care they were promised.

It took about four months, on average, to process veterans' claim for disability pensions when Secretary Shinseki took office in 2009. By the summer of 2012, the average wait time had ballooned to nearly nine months.

By law, a veteran is supposed to see a physician within 30 days of requesting an appointment. In fact, wait times at VA hospitals average between three and four months, veterans groups report.

Vets who seek emergency care at VA facilities typically have to wait twice as long for treatment as do patients who go to emergency rooms in civilian hospitals, according to an analysis by the Washington Times.

How many duties must Mr. Shinseki neglect before the president will fire him?

Mr. Obama evidently thinks that if he says the right things, he needn't actually do anything.

That's worked in the past. But many journalists are as furious as the rest of us are about how veterans have been treated. Liberal pundits [Eugene Robinson](#) and [Dana Milbank](#) are among those who've demanded a thorough housecleaning.

And journalists have begun to notice the president talks a better game than he plays.

"Firing Shinseki would suggest he was actually taking responsibility, rather than just talking about taking responsibility," said [John Kass](#) of the Chicago Tribune.

Because journalists are paying so much more attention to this scandal, it's risky for Mr. Obama not to clean house, and puzzling that he hasn't. Is Mr. Shinseki a long lost relative? Does he have blackmail material?

Perhaps Mr. Obama fears that if the massive failure of this government-run health care system is fully exposed, people may wonder what it portends for Obamacare.

The VA is "socialized medicine that works," New York Times [columnist Paul Krugman](#) wrote in 2011. The VA is an example of a single payer system that provides "better care for more people at far less cost," [Physicians for a National Health Program](#) said last September.

No liberal is saying that now.

If the president cared as much for vets as for his image, he'd offer those who've waited 90+ days a voucher to get the health care they need somewhere else. It would cost less than what we're spending for the health care they're not getting.

Former Navy SEAL [Marcus Luttrell](#) has another idea. Make the bigshot politicians in Washington go to the VA for health care. If that doesn't spark reform, nothing can.

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