

FIRST GET A SERVICE OFFICER FROM THE VFW OR DAV.  
THEN CHECK OUT THE VVAS GUIDES ON CLAIMS:  
YOU WILL HAVE TO ESTABLISH A STRESSOR.....

<http://www.vva.org/ptsd.html>

To prevail in a PTSD-based claim, you must establish that you have undergone a traumatic event or events (called a stressor) during your military service that would support a clinical diagnosis of PTSD. Unless your military records document that you were in combat with the enemy, your claimed stressor must be documented. A combat-related military occupational specialty (MOS) or combat-related awards or decorations ( e.g. , Combat Infantryman's Badge or a Purple Heart) are examples of documented combat experience. However, if your service records do not demonstrate a combat-related MOS or decorations and you assert that you had experienced combat or enemy fire or attack, the VA is required to assist you in obtaining documentation that supports your claim (including researching government records) that could place you in a documented area of attack or an isolated hostile incident.

You are entitled to one copy of your entire VA claims file (or C-file) without charge. If you have ever had any official contact with the VA that relates to a claim for benefits, your claims file should contain all of the service and post-service medical records that the VA has, as well as any correspondence to or from the VA and adjudication-related documentation.

#### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A STRESSOR LETTER

##### 1. **NAME.** Rank. Service Number. Days Of Time In War Zone:

Make sure your current correct address and claim number are at the top of your stressor letter, begin by re-stating your name, rank, and service number. Then begin with your war service. Do not mention time spent In the United States. Many veterans ramble on about stateside service, and this has nothing to do with combat stress. If your MOS or specialty was something other than combat related (supply, motor transport, etc.) but you did not serve In your MOS or, specialty mention it here because the VA will turn you down unless you prove you were In combat. If you were In Special Forces or Recon etc., don't go Into any detail about stateside training.

##### 2. **Were you wounded:**

If you were wounded Include dates if possible, and number of times wounded. This refers only to wounds which were treated by medics, corpsmen. or doctors for which you received a purple heart and are a matter of record If you have malaria or any type malaria fever and were treated for It, mention It also, If you believe It may be In your records.

##### 3. **If You Killed The Enemy:**

include the times you actually saw the enemy and killed them. Be specific If possible. Don't say something like. (**my** outfit killed 53 NVA in the fire fight). That's too general. State what you were doing when the enemy was killed and how it affected you. (I kept firing and I could see them falling as they ran toward us).

#### **4. If you saw Americans die:**

Most combat vets lost close friends in combat. For some vets remembering names is difficult, but this will definitely help your claim if you can remember the approximate date and names of men in your outfit killed while you were there. If someone killed was your best friend, mention it and how it affected you. The names will be checked by the VA against KIA lists. If friends were wounded bad enough to be shipped home, you may mention this and include their names if possible. (This is all verification that you were in combat. Try to use real names instead of nicknames at all times).

#### **5. If you saw civilian dead:**

In villages, in the jungle, or other places. This was traumatic to many combat troops especially if they had to handle the bodies. Seeing dead children often has long range effects on combat vets, particularly if the children or civilians were killed during fire fights or mistaken for the enemy.

#### **6. If you were on body detail:**

Or if you otherwise handled the bodies of dead Americans, either in the field or in the rear where the bodies were stripped for shipment home. This often causes extreme trauma to those who handled the bodies.

#### **7. Times you did not think you would survive:**

Incidents when you thought you would not be alive the next day help with a PTSD claim. When you had given up hope and thought for sure you would be killed with no chance of survival. (Describe in detail).

#### **8. All incidents of combat:**

Small arms fire, fire fight., mortar and rocket attacks, booby trap, mines, artillery, etc. Each time you were in a life threatening situation whether you were able to return fire or not. (Walking through mine fields, walking point. etc.)

#### **9. Names of operations or search and destroy:**

Remembering names of specific field operations and sweeps can often be helpful because the military often left much information out of service records. Some combat troops have very complete service records. Others have had their records lost or destroyed, or information was never entered. Any information you can remember about field operations is verification of combat role.

#### **10. How your life has changed because of war:**

State your problems today because of your war service. Divorce, substance abuse, nightmares, paranoia, trouble holding job. lack of feeling, etc. If you have been in therapy or other treatment, mention this. Stress the negative side of your life. Mention nothing good that has happened to you. Don't say you get along great with people and you are happy most of the time. Stress that life is a constant struggle due to your combat service. (You used to love fireworks but now when you hear them you hit the ground. You used to love to go to sporting events but now you Can't cope with being in crowds, etc.).

**NOTE:** Those ten points will help you write a stressor letter which will have a good chance of passing the VA rating board. When writing about combat, write **how it affected you personally**. Don't write, stuff like ..(We sat around and ate dinner and then the sergeant told us a story about his wife and then Joe tried to steal my bean and wieners). Too many Vets go into detail which is not important. Begin each segment of combat with the combat and how it affected you. (You were scared. You thought you were going to die., etc.). Many veterans are afraid to mention certain situations when they killed people. for fear of charges being brought against them. This will not happen. Killings during combat are for survival. The government would have to prove you killed on purpose without just cause, and in the case of enemy troops and civilians, this is not possible. Many of these ten points overlap with each other. You must try to put them in some kind of order. Think about that you want to say for a few weeks before writing it down. Then try to arrange your thoughts in some kind of order. The best solution is to be brief and to the point. This is difficult for many veterans,, which is why so many veterans with PTSD never follow through with a claim. The best average length for a stressor letter is not more than four pages ,single spaced.