Bulletproof Reporting That Explores The Human Impact Of Military Service

A CAMPAIGN FOR THE WAR HORSE NEWS
Today, the U.S. government spends nearly $1 trillion annually on defense and veterans affairs, more than twice what it spends on health care, education, infrastructure, and diplomacy combined.
In contrast, less than 5% of journalism focuses on defining the complex experiences of military service.
The War Horse is the only national newsroom devoted to the coverage of this vast investment of our nation’s most treasured resource: the people whose lives are impacted by military service.
The Question At The Core Of Our Mission

The very existence of The War Horse begs a fundamental question:

How can a trillion-dollar enterprise, funded by the blood and treasure of the richest nation on Earth, be so opaque to the people it was created to serve?

This question is so complex, so rooted in the nature of human existence and our commitment to self-governance, that The War Horse is devoted to answering it, despite the challenges and obstacles we face. We commit ourselves to examining the United States military through a lens of human experience, the place where its impact on our nation is most deeply felt.
The Answer Is Journalism

More than ever, our democracy demands muscular journalism, written by energetic, broadly educated reporters who possess the resources and power to explore big ideas for making the military and world a better place.

The War Horse is poised to scale our distinctive journalism model to its full potential by leveraging rigorous, solutions-driven reporting that is inspired by the models of ProPublica and Atlantic Media, two of the most respected newsrooms in nonprofit and legacy publishing.

By blending the best of these models, The War Horse will become a digital magazine that is home to an unmatched team of military reporters who publish investigations, enterprise reporting, and profiles that just can’t be found elsewhere.
“The War Horse is an award-winning nonprofit newsroom that is considered not just important to veterans and military families, but vital by renowned journalists and military officials.”

- Tom Jennings, NYU Journalism Professor and Frontline Producer
Our Origin Story

“Because of your story, I didn’t kill myself,” a fellow Marine told me.

Like that Marine, I served in Iraq. I grew up in the suburbs and enlisted in the infantry. He was an Iraqi immigrant-turned-military linguist. I served in Afghanistan, where a rocket-propelled grenade led to my medical retirement. He left active duty and came home to a battle with his family, which left him feeling conflicted about his military service.

Our lives and wars were worlds apart. I was part of the killing. He wasn’t. My friends were put in body bags. His weren’t. Yet both of us felt that suicide was the answer. I tried to kill myself. He didn’t. Because of something I’d written. More than any moment in my journalism career, I felt like I made a difference—that I’d saved a life.

That unexpected phone call cemented my decision to launch The War Horse. Now, as our team celebrates five years of impactful reporting, we’re embarking on an unprecedented undertaking to leverage the power of journalism to address the most pressing concerns of our times. War. Peace. And the human impact of military service.

Semper Fidelis,

Thomas Brennan
Founder
The Face Of America

Military service reflects the people, power, and values of our nation. The core value that informs our reporting is our understanding of the human impact of that service on the lives of those who serve and those who benefit from that service. We cannot let the stories of both heroism and horror go untold, as well as the stories of their impact on our families, communities, and national purpose.
"I would say simply that The War Horse’s story is a piece that Vanity Fair is proud to have run, and that it exemplifies the highest values both of journalism and of national service."

- Cullen Murphy
Editor-At-Large, Vanity Fair
The War Horse Mission

The War Horse team envisions a world where national service is widely understood as a defining pillar of our democracy. To accomplish this vision, The War Horse will serve as the most trusted newsroom for military reporting that holds power to account, strengthens our democracy, and improves understanding of the human impact of military service.
The War Horse Team

Thomas Brennan, Founder and Creative Director

Samantha Daniels, Director of Operations
Creative trailblazer and leader driven by her need to problem solve and her experiences as a Marine aviator’s spouse. Diligent. Inquisitive. Meticulous.

Kelly Kennedy, Managing Editor
The only American woman to have both served in combat in the U.S. military and covered U.S. combat as a civilian. Ethical. Disciplined. Selfless.
Our Strategy for Transformation

The War Horse harnesses the power of journalism to reveal the human impact of military service. We are confident that this kind of journalism, rooted in a commitment to fairness, substance, solutions, and accountability, will deepen the already significant trust readers have in The War Horse. We will accomplish this by:

**CONSTRUCTING** a digital magazine where the best journalists in the country publish weekly original investigative and enterprise reporting through multiple distribution channels.

**COLLABORATING** with national and local newsrooms to get closer to stories and communities. Our combined expertise will create impactful journalism that reaches millions of people.

**COMMUNITY BUILDING** alongside partners and contributors to forge a resilient infrastructure. Our team of exceptional journalists will inform and empower the citizens of the United States.
CONSTRUCTING
A Digital Magazine

In recent years, the military reporting space has been decimated, leaving the needs of veterans and military families widely unexplored, misunderstood, and unmet. The problem is growing worse. The War Horse will transform our digital magazine into a more powerful, more impactful newsroom that will be the home for:

**BULLETPROOF INVESTIGATIONS** that inspire civic engagement and have led to changes to military and federal laws. War Horse investigations have received the prestigious Edward R. Murrow and Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Journalism Awards.

**AMBITIOUS ENTERPRISE REPORTING** that leverages our access and expertise to showcase the complex human experiences of military service and proposes bold ideas for making the military and world a better place. Our enterprise reporting has received multiple awards for excellence in multimedia storytelling.

**AN UNPARALLELED NEWSROOM TEAM** of the most heavily resourced military reporters in journalism. The War Horse will forge a team of three editors and more than a dozen investigative, data, and feature reporters. A rigorous fact-checking process will ensure the highest editorial standards of any newsroom.
COLLABORATING
With Local and National Newsrooms

During a time when nearly 60% of Americans distrust news media, The War Horse has established a reputation as a deeply trusted source for military reporting. We will:

EXPAND DISTRIBUTION PLATFORMS to amplify the impact of our reporting projects. The War Horse will engage with our audiences, both in person and online, to foster meaningful discussions about the human impact of military service.

FOSTER DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIPS that leverage our deep understanding of military service to support and strengthen the Fourth Estate. We will replicate the model of ProPublica, which has published some of the most impactful reporting in decades.

ASSEMBLE DIVERSE TEAMS of communications, marketing, and technology professionals to foster partnerships that establish The War Horse as the preeminent “teaching hospital” of military newsrooms.
COMMUNITY BUILDING
Alongside Those We Serve

The War Horse thrives when the communities we serve are represented throughout our work. We will collaborate with readers, staff, and supporters to ensure those most affected by military service have a prominent voice in the local and national conversation. We will:

**EXPAND MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES** for veterans and military families. War Horse writing seminars are the preeminent professional development program, and our graduates have been featured in The New York Times, Washington Post, PBS NewsHour, CNN, and SXSW.

**PILOT A MILITARY SPOUSE REPORTING NETWORK** as the leading professional development and employment program for military spouses in journalism. The nationwide network will address news deserts in communities across the United States.

**SCALE A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODEL** to elevate the voices of the people we serve. We will forge a robust business team to implement a multi-revenue funding model and deliver world-class programs that inspire civic engagement.
We know there is far too little news coverage of the military and its impact on those who serve. But what are the implications of this lack of reporting on the relationship between civilians and members of the military community?

To answer that essential question, The War Horse launched a partnership with leading universities, to create the first ever research project on how the media impacts the military and civilian divide.

More than 300 experts in national security and media participated including former government appointees and senior military officials, dozens of journalists, and current public affairs officers from the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

94% said the media does not report on veterans and military families in a way that fosters understanding and connection with the general public

65% said the current media landscape widens the military and civilian divide

70% said a lack of reporting poses a threat to maintaining an all-volunteer military force

90% said the declining military reporting ecosystem threatens U.S. national security
"Amazing, Invaluable Work!"

The War Horse publishes journalism that is unique, essential, and unduplicated in the American media landscape. By reporting on these vital and uncovered stories, The War Horse is changing the relationship between the public and a trillion dollar industry impacting millions of American lives.

During a time when 60% of Americans distrust the media, The War Horse has a 98% reader satisfaction rate.

71% of participants said that they’d lose an irreplaceable news source if The War Horse ceased to exist.

90% said it is important for foundations, corporations, and individuals to philanthropically invest in nonprofit newsrooms covering veterans and military families.
We Need Your Help

The War Horse has proof of concept. For five years we have bootstrapped this award-winning coverage for $500,000 a year or less. But we envision a more impactful news organization.

We will scale The War Horse by adding resources, technology, and, most importantly, journalists. Dozens of senior reporters and editors have been cut from leading newsrooms. These talented journalists could join our team. But we can’t do that without you.

We are asking you to join forces with a national movement of philanthropists who are standing up for the best of our civic values, the importance of solutions-based local journalism, and the future of our democracy.

Join The War Horse team on this transformative journey.
Our Goal Is to Raise $10M to Transform The War Horse Into a Resilient News Institution That Strengthens Our Democracy
Help Scale Our Impact Over the Next Three Years

$5M  Hire Leading Journalists

These funds will allow us to add three editors and more than a dozen investigative, data, and feature reporters.

$3M  Forge a Sustainable Newsroom

We will invest in technology and build a business team to implement a multi-revenue funding model. Doing so will assure sustainability as The War Horse continues to grow and remains free to all.

$2M  Deploy Reporting Resources

Your support will advance civic engagement by supporting local military reporters and building a network of partnerships across the United States.
“What The War Horse is doing by giving this generation of veterans and military spouses a voice, and educating people on the human impact of military service, is priceless.”

- 2019 Graduate, Writing Seminar for Medics and Corpsmen