The Hidden Burden of Modern War: PTSD as the Dominant State-Recognized Disability

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Introduction

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a major cause of long-term morbidity following modern warfare.
- During the "Swords of Iron" War, many soldiers were exposed to prolonged, life-threatening combat, increasing their risk for PTSD.
- Data describing the burden of PTSD-related long-term disability remain limited.
- This study aims to characterize the initial cohort of soldiers recognized for PTSD-related disabilities following the "Swords of Iron" war.

Materials and Methods

- Data were extracted from the IDF Trauma Registry and cross-referenced with data from the Israeli National Trauma Registry and the Ministry of Defense Rehabilitation Department registry.
- All Casualties injured during "Swords of Iron" War (October 2023 – October 2025) were included.
- Comparisons were performed between soldiers with PTSD-recognized disability and those with disability recognized for other causes.

Results

- Overall, 815 disability cases were recorded.
- Demographics and overall injury patterns were similar.
- PTSD cases were associated with mass casualty incidents (p=0.003).
- PTSD group had fewer critical interventions, including blood administrations and airway interventions. They sustained less critical injuries (ISS≥25), and consequently required fewer ICU days.
- Aeromedical evacuation was more common in the PTSD group.
- Regarding disability percentages, **overrepresentation of PTSD-recognized individuals was observed within the 40–100% disability range** (p<0.001).

Measure	PTSD N=307	Non-PTSD N=508	p-value
Blood transfusion	11%	16%	0.03
Airway intervention	2%	5.3%	0.018
Critical injury (ISS ≥25)	14%	24%	0.024
ICU days (mean)	3	7	0.002
Aeromedical evacuation	65%	56%	0.009

Conclusion

- Our data demonstrates a significant divergence between anatomical injury severity and long-term functional impairment.
- While the initial PTSD cohort exhibited lower clinical acuity, they were characterized by relatively high disability ratings.
- These findings highlight risk factors for chronic morbidity that necessitate universal psychological screening for all combat casualties.

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At the moment of truth,
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