

## Cutting-Edge Virtual Reality Systems to Fight PTSD Being Rolled Out at New Maryland Facility

By [Clay Dillow](#) Posted 06.21.2010 at 1:13 pm



**Virtual Reality for Returning Troops** The U.S. Military has long used VR as a training tool for troops preparing for combat. Now a new VR system will help those troops returning from the battlefield cope with and overcome mental disorders like PTSD and psychological illnesses brought on by traumatic brain injuries.

Nearly half the soldiers returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan are diagnosed with some kind of psychological condition, like post-traumatic stress disorder, brought on by specific battlefield experiences or traumatic brain injuries sustained during combat. To treat these mental battle scars, the new National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) will introduce state-of-the-art **virtual reality technology** that will help gently reintroduce soldiers to their experiences.

The \$500,000 CAREN -- the Computer Assisted Rehabilitation Environment -- consists of a treadmill, a massive curved screen, and various projectors and cameras that allow the subject six degrees of freedom in moving about his virtual environment. For those learning to use an artificial limb or recovering from a brain injury, that means the ability to relearn how to drive, walk, or navigate an environment from the safety of the hospital.

For those with PTSD or other mental disorders brought on by combat, it means a safe, controlled environment in which service members can slowly reacquaint themselves with the traumatic combat experiences at the root of their disorders. Doctors think this could greatly speed up recovery times and help severely affected patients bring their lives back to normal.

Given the fact that the rate of PTSD in servicemen and women who serve back-to-back tours -- and that's a lot of them these days -- is tremendously high, advanced treatments like CAREN are a top priority for military medical personnel. Such treatment can help them get back in the field with their units or reintegrate them into life minus the war zone.

[[Armed With Science, CBC](#)]

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