

"Exposing
the true costs
of war"

The War Crimes Times

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In this issue

War Crimes Unnoticed

Most folks think of war crimes as misdeeds explicitly codified in international law and perpetrated in the course of violent conflict. But crimes – illegal, immoral, or shameful acts and their consequences – associated with any aspect of war can also be regarded as war crimes.

Isn't it a crime to corrupt our youth? Yet, as **Ann Pelo** and **David Swanson** relate, we're not just killing and torturing children in war and recruiting them as warriors, but military leaders are working to insure that childhood education is military readiness training.

Once the youth become soldiers, they often suffer the traumatic stress and moral injury that **Nan Levinson** describes. These injured soldiers are then frequently denied proper treatment, **Michael Prysner** writes, and persecuted into suicide. Aren't these crimes, too?

Consider also the war crimes against nature, which as **Helen Jaccard** and **Robert Redford** describe them, can occur in peaceful places (Sardinia and Jeju Island), even in peaceful times, as militaries commandeer strategically-located islands for bases and places for merchants of destruction to test their new toys.

Misallocation of funds is a crime; and directing funds away from the well-being of citizens and into the coffers of the war industry ought to be a war crime – as **Leah Bolger** and **David Swanson** suggest.

How can crimes so obvious go unnoticed? Because we only notice the unusual; and militarism permeates and dominates our society. Our popular culture perpetuates the myths of glorious war and our national leadership rewrites the past to fit the myth, as **John Grant** aptly illustrates using John Wayne and the Vietnam Commemoration Project as examples.

For reports on more "traditional" war crimes, we feature **Felicity Arbuthnot** on UN-backed "rebels" in Syria, **Ross Caputi** (in the Letters column) with new information on Fallujah, **Ed Kinane** on drones, **Tom Hayden** reviewing **Medea Benjamin's** book *Drone Warfare*, **Paul Craig Roberts** on some of Washington's war criminals, and **Soraya Sepahpour-Ulrich** on Iran sanctions as mass murder. Additionally, **Marti Hiken** and **Luke Hiken** explain the real reason the U.S. is involved in so many wars.

Rounding out the issue, **Dave Lindorf** writes on "democracy," **Ben Schreiner** describes the buildup for war in the Mideast, and **Joe Michaud**, **Ed Tick**, and **Siegfried Sassoon** provide poetry. The artwork of **Natasha Mayers** and **Nora Tryon**, **Juan Fuentes** and **Art Hazelwood**, and Korean graffitists brings color to our pages, as does a photo from **J.K. Johnson**.



Poster by Natasha Mayers and Nora Tryon prepared for demonstration against Air Force Thunderbirds airshow in Brunswick, ME

Veterans For Peace Supports UN Committee in Questioning U.S. Recruitment, Killing of Children

by **David Swanson**

Leah Bolger, president of Veterans For Peace, applauded a United Nations Committee in July for raising concerns about the recruitment of children into the U.S. military, the

U.S. killing of children in Afghanistan, the U.S. detention and torture of children labeled "combatants," and the provision of weapons by the United States to other nations employing child soldiers.

(Continued on page 5)

Terrorism as an Instrument of U.S. Foreign Policy UN-Backed Rogue States Plan Syria's Slaughter

by **Felicity Arbuthnot**

The greatest crime since World War II has been U.S. foreign policy.

—Ramsey Clark, former U.S. Attorney General

On the 4th of May 2012, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon chaired a Security Council meeting: "Highlighting Changing Nature, Character of Scourge of Terrorism." [i.] This followed a ministerial-level meeting on: "threats to international peace and security posed by terrorism."

Ban Ki-moon's opening address underlined the importance of unity in tackling the problem: "By working together – from strengthening law enforcement to tackling the underlying drivers of extremism – we can greatly reduce this major threat to peace and security," he stated.

Presumably he did not encourage Permanent Members of the Security Council and other UN Member nations in funding terrorism, or "extremism," since he continued: "The Security Council reiterates its strong and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever, and for whatever purposes, and stresses that any terrorist acts are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivation."

The thirteen-page final document further states that:

(Continued on page 15)

Nobody gets out of war unmarked Mad, Bad, Sad: What's Really Happened to America's Soldiers

by **Nan Levinson**

"PTSD is going to color everything you write," came the warning from a step-mother of a Marine, a woman who keeps track of such things. That was in 2005, when post-traumatic stress disorder, a.k.a. PTSD, wasn't getting much attention, but soon it was pretty much all anyone wrote about. Story upon story about the damage done to our guys [and our women] in uniform – drinking, divorce, depression, destitution – a laundry list of miseries and victimhood. When it comes to veterans, it seems like the only response we can imagine is to feel sorry for them.

Victim is one of the two roles we allow our soldiers and veterans (the other is, of course, hero), but most don't have PTSD, and this isn't one of those stories.

Civilian to the core, I've escaped any firsthand experience of war, but I've spent the past seven years talking with current GIs and recent veterans, and among the many things they've taught me is that nobody gets out of war unmarked. That's especially true when your war turns out to be a shadowy, relentless occupation of a distant land, which requires you to do things that you regret and that continue to haunt you.

(Continued on page 12)

Letters

Fallujah: depleted or enriched uranium weapons?

Dear War Crimes Times,

When I told my brother-in-law that the American military used depleted uranium in Fallujah during the Iraq War, he said that it had to be a myth since if it were true, it would have been all over the news. He cited Obama's drone attacks as an example of how the media is up to date with what is going on in the world concerning America's so-called War on Terror. I am almost certain that I read about this horrible act perpetrated by our military in your newspaper a few issues ago. Who is right and can you please send me the issue with the article in it so I can send it to him to read for himself?

David A. Kime
Fairless Hills, PA

Editor responds: I'm sorry but we don't maintain paper copies of past issues. But links to PDFs of all past issues can be found at WarCrimesTimes.org. The article you refer to was likely "Remember Fallujah?" in the fall 2010 WCT (pps. 7-8). But here's a direct response from the author, a veteran of the Fallujah campaign:

Dear Mr. Kime,

Unfortunately, we don't know if the U.S. military used depleted uranium weapons in Fallujah. What we do know is that a very serious health crisis in Fallujah emerged shortly after two major U.S.-led assaults destroyed the city in 2004. We know the U.S. used depleted uranium weapons in Iraq during the Gulf War. And we have evidence of uranium exposure in civilians who live near sites that the U.S. bombed in Afghanistan and Iraq, including the city of Fallujah. Even though common sense would suggest that history has repeated itself in Fallujah and that depleted uranium is the cause of their health crisis, we have to be careful not to reach conclusions without sufficient proof.

Your brother-in-law is certainly wrong that the media accurately reports the types of weapons that the U.S. military is using and their effects. But recent scientific research into this topic suggests that the truth may be even scarier than depleted uranium.

When reports began emerging about sharp increases in birth defects, cancers, and infant mortalities in Fallujah in 2006, many activists immediately linked these symptoms with the major U.S.-led assaults on Fallujah in 2004 and assumed that depleted uranium and white phosphorous weapons were the primary or major causes. Such assumptions were not at all far-fetched, given the extensive data that we have about the use of depleted uranium weapons against Iraq during the Gulf War, and the anecdotal evidence we have of increases in cancers and birth defects in the areas where these weapons were used.

However, many people were shocked when recent research found slightly enriched uranium in hair, soil, and water samples from Fallujah—not depleted uranium! This finding has brought attention to the possibility that there is a whole new generation of weapons, of which the general public is completely unaware, that use “undepleted” uranium.

The possibility that undepleted uranium was being used in U.S. weapons was first stumbled upon by the Uranium Medical Research Center when they found high levels of undepleted uranium in Afghan civilians' urine samples in 2002. Not surprisingly, they found traces of uranium with the same radio-isotopic signature in near-by bomb craters.

Although no one has been able to find conclusive proof that there is a new generation of weapons that use undepleted uranium, there is mounting evidence that this is the

case. Undepleted and slightly enriched uranium have also been found in bomb craters in Lebanon from Israeli weapons. And we have U.S. patents showing that uranium is used in one form or another in several different weapons. But there is still much that we don't know, because the U.S. government has not been transparent about the types of weapons that it used in Iraq and where it used them.

The U.S. government denies the negative health consequences of uranium weapons and dismisses any studies that suggest they are harmful. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence that these weapons exist and that they cause lingering health problems in populations living in the vicinity of where these weapons have been used that reasonable people should be alarmed and should be asking questions. Yet the mainstream media remains silent.

It is quite possible that we have been waging a form of nuclear war for the past 20 years, but this possibility is not even raised for investigation. While the use of drones appears to be within the bounds of acceptable debate in this country, the use of uranium weapons is not.

This is an extremely serious issue that may affect the entire planet. These weapons, after detonation, create a fine radioactive uranium dust that could easily be transported around the planet by air or water. If we ever are able to prove the existence of these weapons, prove that they were used at specific times at specific locations, and prove that they do cause health problems for civilians, we will have proof that the U.S. is guilty of one of the greatest crimes in history—the indiscriminate poisoning and irradiation of regions of people for the half-life of uranium: 4.5 billion years. The motivation for media censorship on this issue is clear.

While it might be a bit premature to denounce the U.S. for using uranium weapons in Fallujah, we should be denouncing our government and our media for their unwillingness to investigate this issue. Iraqis, Afghans, Lebanese, and all other peoples who may have been affected by uranium weapons deserve answers. More studies need to be done to find out what is making these people sick. If it can be proven that uranium weapons are to blame, then they should be banned immediately and their victims should be awarded compensation. It is imperative that we act now to find answers.

Ross Caputi
The Justice For Fallujah Project
Area 51

I distribute your excellent publication here on the Big Island of Hawaii as a result of meeting some of you at Duke University over 2 years ago at a three-day international conference on torture.

I am greatly impressed by your Summer 2012 issue on religion and the military, but the article written by Terry Allen on toxic wastes motivated me to write.

I am puzzled by her theory that 9/11 was only a conspiracy theory, considering the vast amount of data showing 9/11 to be a conspiracy FACT. These data show far more evidence to prove a conspiracy FACT than the U.S. government put forward to substantiate its claim of 9/11 being only a theory.

How can you ignore the demand for a public hearing on 9/11 to hear evidence of a true conspiracy put forward by survivors, architects, medical doctors, physicists, engineers, airplane pilots, military officers, etc., etc.? If the only hearing on 9/11 proved conclusively that 9/11 was not a conspiracy, why isn't the U.S. government willing to end the 9/11 controversy by having another hearing that would consider the highly technical data showing 9/11 to be conspiracy fact?

She mentions area 51 being used to get rid of toxic wastes by burning/dumping, but shows nothing (such as a photo) to support this. Area 51 may well be of interest to only a dedicated band of tinfoil-hat nutters as she states, but her equal disdain for evidence put forward to show 9/11 to be conspiracy FACT, discredits what she deplors of the effects of the military disposal of toxic wastes worldwide; effects that are consistently shown to be detrimental to the health of those of us who live on the Big Island of Hawaii.

Paul Patnode, AKA El Nica (The Nicaraguan)
Volcano, HI

Editor responds: Paul, thanks for your enthusiastic support of the WCT!

Terry Allen's brief mention of 9/11 was simply a time reference; she took no position one way or the other on any kind of conspiracy. The reference to Area 51 tinfoil-hat nutters was restricted to the space alien believers. Regarding Area 51 as a toxic waste dump, a 1994 law suit resulted in an EPA inspection and decision to put the facility on their hazardous waste docket, that is, the list of federal facilities with hazardous waste. But incredulously, and almost certainly due to government pressure, the EPA would not confirm that Area 51 actually had hazardous waste. In 1995, President Bill Clinton issued a Presidential Determination exempting the facility from environmental disclosure laws. The lawsuit was a topic on "60 Minutes" in March of 1996. Host Leslie Stahl related a witness's testimony, "He and other Area 51 employees say security is so complete that nothing except the workers ever leaves the base, not even garbage. It is either burned or buried right there, everything from food scraps, to jeeps, to jet parts...and those drums of toxic chemicals and wastes used in classified programs." The federal judge overseeing the lawsuit dismissed it, ruling that pursuing the case risked "significant harm to national security."

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The War Crimes Times provides information on war and the war crimes that invariably accompany war, the need to hold war criminals accountable, the many costs of war, and the effects of our war culture on our national character and international reputation. Additionally and importantly, we also report on the efforts of the many people who sacrifice their time, money, and comfort to work for peace.

Our contributors include journalists, legal experts, poets, artists, and veterans speaking from experience. While their views may not always be entirely consistent with ours, their topics address the concerns of the War Crimes Times.

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We welcome submissions (guidelines at WarCrimesTimes.org) of original articles, poetry, artwork, cartoons, news items, and letters to the editor – which are due no later than the 1st of the months of publication: March, June, September, December. Contact: editor@WarCrimesTimes.org

This issue was produced and distributed by: Kim Carlyle, Susan Carlyle, Susan Oehler, Lyle Petersen, Mark Runge, Nadya Williams, and Robert Yoder.

WCT has been endorsed by March Forward! and the Justice for Fallujah Project.

Dear Mr. President,

What is it with these people in the Middle East anyway? We spend trillions of dollars on decade-long wars to make the world safe for democracy and 70% of those people think we're the second biggest threat to security and stability in the region? Second only to Israel? Even our two biggest allies believe that nonsense? Egypt (\$1.3 billion a year in military aid—you might want to consider cutting that off) and Saudi Arabia (not exactly a model of democracy but they do sell us a lot of oil, 20% more last year than in 2010). What don't these people get? We free Afghanistan from the bloody hand of the Taliban, topple Saddam in Iraq, help the Freedom Fighters of Libya kill Muammar Qaddafi, Mubarak's gone, Saleh's gone, Ben Ali's gone, Assad is going, bin Laden's dead, and still they think we're a threat to peace in the region? Just because we invaded Iraq under false pretenses, blew everything up including their government and they still don't have dependable electricity, water, sewage, or much of anything else including safe streets and markets, let alone justice or a government that works? Just because Hamid Karzai and his cronies in Afghanistan have looted the country – and the U.S. taxpayer; gained a reputation as one of the most corrupt governments on the face of the earth; and done nothing for their people? Just because Libya's still in chaos? Just because we're threatening to invade another country or two if they don't do what we say? Come on, Mr. President, teach these benighted ignoramus a lesson about how democracy really works. Show them what capitalism can do, how war is business in more ways than one. Kick some more ass, fly more drones, launch more Hellfires, unleash Israel to take out those imaginary Iranian reactors. Bring real peace to the region. Earn that Nobel Peace Prize. I know you don't listen to anyone but your innermost of inner circle but here's my advice: do it quick in case Mitt pulls off an upset. Who knows what that guy might do? With all his flipping and flopping he might bring the troops home and get a Nobel Peace Prize too. Or, as clueless as he is, he might actually start Armageddon and inadvertently give joy to the Evangelicals, you know, the end days, the latter days, the second coming, the Rapture and all that? Think about it, Mr. President, bizarre things happen when people get power. You're a perfect example. Who would have ever thought a Nobel Peace Prize winner was actually a war criminal?

– Robert Yoder

Robert writes a letter each day at dearmrprezident-letters.blogspot.com

Sanctions: Diplomacy's Weapon of Mass Murder

by Soraya Sepahpour-Ulrich

The blockade/sanctions regime is by its nature inherently illegal under the Geneva Protocol, for three reasons. First, it targets civilians in breach of Articles 48 and 51(2). Secondly, it constitutes indiscriminate attack, in breach of Article 51(3). Thirdly and most flagrantly, it employs starvation as a method of warfare, in breach of Article 54.

– Shuna Lennon, “Sanctions, genocide, and war crimes,” a paper presented to the International Law Association, February 29, 2000

And if I am president, I will begin by imposing a new round of far tougher economic sanctions on Iran.

– Mitt Romney

In 1945, the United States of America dropped two atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki immediately killing 120,000 civilians. The final death toll of the horrendous bombings has been conservatively estimated at well over 200,000 men, women, and children. To this day, the world continues to be shocked and horrified by the visual images that captured the death and destruction caused by the bombs. The negative impact prompted America to devise a different weapon of mass murder – sanctions.

Unlike the shock and horror which accompanied the atomic bombs dropped on Japan, there were no images of the 500,000 Iraqi children whose lives were cut short by sanctions to jolt the world into reality. Not only has America taken pride in the mass killing of innocent children [a reference to then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's infamous 1996 response, “we think the price is worth it,” when asked about the half million Iraqi children who died], but encouraged by silence and the surrender to its weapon of choice, it has turned diplomacy's weapon of mass murder on another country – Iran.

There has been little resistance to sanctions in the false belief that sanctions are a tool of diplomacy and preferable to war. Enforcement of this belief has been a major victory for American public diplomacy. The reality is otherwise. Sanctions kill indiscriminately; they are far deadlier than “Fat Man” and “Little Boy” – the two atomic bombs that took the lives of over 200,000 people. In the case of Iraq, the United Nations estimated 1,700,000 million Iraqi civilians died as a result of sanctions. One and a half million more victims than were caused by the horrific atomic bombs dropped on Japan. Diplomacy's finest hour.

Even though Denis Halliday, former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, and many other top officials resigned from their posts in protest to the sanctions saying: “The policy of economic sanctions is totally bankrupt. We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and as terrifying as that,” the



murders continued. In 1999, seventy members of Congress appealed to President Clinton to lift the sanctions and end what they termed “infanticide masquerading as policy.” But America continued its lead with its diplomatic death dance.

America, a morally bankrupt nation and the self-appointed global morality police, obeying the wishes of the pro-Israel lobby groups, has for years now pointed its deadly weapon of mass murder at Iran – sanctions disguised as diplomacy. The misinformed and

Economic sanctions inflict great pain, suffering, and physical harm on the innocent civilians.

misguided global community indulges itself in the false belief that war has been avoided, without thought to suffering and death.

In fact, the notion that economic sanctions are always morally preferable to the use of military force has been challenged by Albert C. Pierce, Ethics and National Security professor at the National Defense University. His analysis showed that economic sanctions inflict great pain, suffering, and physical harm on the innocent civilians--so much so that small-scale military operations were sometimes preferable (*Ethics and International Affairs*, 1996).

But America prefers not to engage in battle. Not only would military confrontation bring global condemnation, but history has shown us that while America can win battles, it cannot win wars (Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan...). It therefore resorts to sanctions – a coward's ruthless “diplomacy” tool in order to disguise its role as the enemy with the purpose of depriving the target nation of self-defense against such horrendous aggression. Sanctions – the warfare by an enemy unidentified by a military uniform – are intended to eliminate resistance; to attack women and children, the weak and the old; and to bring about regime change; all without fear of retaliation or censure by the “peace-loving” community.

In this election year, as in the past, appeasement of the pro-Israel lobbies takes precedent to humanity, to the well-being of Americans, and to the security of the global community.

A 2005 report developed by economists Dean DeRosa and Gary Hufbauer demonstrates that if the United States lifted sanctions on Iran, the world price of oil could fall by 10 percent, translating into an annual savings of between \$38 billion and \$76 billion for the United States alone.

At war even with itself to please the lobbies, the House passed H.R. 1905 – Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act. Putting aside the oxymoron of sanctions and human rights for now, America is demanding that the world community not only partake in deadly sanctions, but do so in direct opposition to the national interests of each and every sovereign nation. This is a sharp departure from the arguments presented by AIPAC [the American Israel Public Affairs Committee] in 1977 in response to the Arab League boycott.

AIPAC successfully defined the Arab League boycott as “harassment and blackmailing of America, an interference with normal business activities... that the boycott activities were contrary to the principles of free trade that the United States has espoused for many years ... and the Arab interference in the business relations of American firms with other countries is in effect an interference with the sovereignty of the United States.”*

However, the United States has successfully blackmailed other nations to be its accomplice in suffering and mass murder – diplomacy's weapon of choice. To believe that Iran (or Syria) is the only target of these sanctions is as naive as believing that sanctions are diplomacy put in place to avoid war. The global impact of the lethal weapon – sanctions – is simply cushioned in diplomacy; a brilliantly and ruthlessly executed diplomatic coup.

Soraya Sepahpour-Ulrich is a Public Diplomacy Scholar, independent researcher, and blogger with a focus on U.S. foreign policy and the role of lobby groups.

* H. Alikhani, *Sanctioning Iran, Anatomy of a Failed Policy*, New York, 2000, p.321.



Nuremberg Trials. Defendants in their dock, circa 1945-1946: Göring, Hess, von Ribbentrop, Keitel, Dönitz, Raeder, von Schirach, Sauckel.

(National Archives photo)

The State Department has an office that hunts German war criminals. Bureaucracies being what they are, the office will exist into next century when any surviving German prison guards will be 200 years old. From time to time the State Department claims to have found a lowly German soldier who was assigned as a prison camp guard. The ancient personage, who had lived in the U.S. for the past 50 or 60 years without doing harm to anyone, is then merciless persecuted, usually on the basis of hearsay. I have never understood what the State Department thinks the alleged prison guard was supposed to have done – freed the prisoners, resign his position? – when Prussian aristocrats, high-ranking German Army generals, and Field Marshall and national hero Erwin Rommel were murdered for trying to overthrow Hitler.

What the State Department needs is an office that rounds up American war criminals.

They are in abundance and not hard to find. Indeed, recently 56 of them made themselves public by signing a letter to President Obama demanding that he send in the U.S. Army to complete the destruction of Syria and its people that Washington has begun.

At the Nuremberg Trials of the defeated Germans after World War II, the U.S. government established the principle that naked aggression – the American way in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Pakistan, and Yemen – is a war crime. Therefore, there is a very strong precedent for the State Department to round up those neoconservatives who are fomenting more war crimes.

But don't expect it to happen. Today, war criminals run the State Department and the entire U.S. Government. They are elected to the presidency, the House, and the Senate, and appointed to the federal courts as judges. American soldiers, such as Bradley Manning, who behave as the State Department expects German soldiers to have behaved, are not honored,

The Neoconservative War Criminals In Our Midst

by Paul Craig Roberts

but are thrown into dungeons and tortured while a court martial case is concocted against them.

Hypocrisy is Washington's hallmark, and all but the most delusional are now accustomed to their rulers speaking one way and behaving in the opposite. It is now part of the American character to regard ourselves as members of the "virtuous nation," "the indispensable people," while our rulers commit war crimes around the globe.

At the Nuremberg Trials of the defeated Germans after World War II, the U.S. government established the principle that naked aggression – the American way in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Pakistan, and Yemen – is a war crime. Therefore, there is a very strong precedent for the State Department to round up those neoconservatives who are fomenting more war crimes.

Whereas we have all been made complicit in war crimes by "our" government, it still behooves us to know who are the active war criminals in our midst who have burdened us with our war criminal reputation.

You can learn the identity of many of those who are driving the world into World War Three, while their policies result in the murder of large numbers of Arabs and Muslims in Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon, by perusing the signatures to the contrived letter to Obama from the neoconservatives calling on Obama to invade Syria in order to "rescue" the Syrian people from their government.

According to the letter signed by 56 neoconservatives, only the Syrian government is responsible for deaths in Syria. The Washington-sponsored and -armed "rebels" are merely protecting the Syrian people from the Assad government. According to the letter signers, the only way the Syrian people can be saved is if Washington overthrows the Syrian government and installs a puppet state attentive to the needs of Israel and Washington.

Among the 56 signatures are a few names from the Syrian National Congress, believed to be a CIA front, and a

few names from dupes among the goyim. The rest of the signatures are those of Jewish neoconservatives tightly allied with Israel, some of whom are apparently dual-Israeli citizens who participate in the formation of U.S. foreign policy. The names on this list comprise a concentration of evil, the goal of which is not only to bring Armageddon to the Syrian people but also to the world.

The letter to Obama is part of the propaganda operation to demonize the Syrian government with lies in order to get rid of a government that supports Hezbollah, the Muslims in southern Lebanon who have twice driven the vaunted, but cowardly, Israeli army out of Lebanon, thus preventing the Israeli government from achieving its aim of stealing the water resources of southern Lebanon.

Not a single sentence in the letter is correct. Listen to this one for example: "The Assad regime poses a grave threat to national security interests of the United States." What utter total absurdity, and the morons who signed the letter pretend to be "security experts."

How do we evaluate the fact that 56 people have no shame whatsoever and will lie to the President of the United States, telling him to his face the most absurd and obvious false things in order to advance their personal agendas at the expense of not merely the lives of Syrians, but by leading to wider war, of life on earth?

These same neocon architects of Armageddon are also working against Iran, Russia, the former Soviet central Asian countries, Ukraine, Belarus, and China. It seems that they can't wait to start a nuclear war.

The letter to Obama and its signatories can be found in Josh Rogin's article, "Conservatives call for Obama to intervene in Syria," at thecable.foreignpolicy.com.

Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy and associate editor of the Wall Street Journal. He was columnist for Business Week, Scripps Howard News Service, and Creators Syndicate and has had many university appointments. His columns at paulcraigroberts.org have attracted a worldwide following.

The Dark Side of Glory

Even in the mind of a child,
There can be fascination
With destruction & death.

I remember Aunt Mamie's
Dining room table, stacked
With copies of *Life* magazine,
Photos of bombed-out cities,
Torpedoed merchant seamen
Swimming, exhausted,
In a sea of crude, ship foundering.
Hard-faced men in coal-scuttle
Helmets tossing stick grenades,
Dead soldiers of loser nations,
Limbs thrust out helter-skelter,
In the mud of Poland, the snow
Of Russia, the sands of Africa.
I saw them first when I was four,
At 71 I still can't forget them.
What is it about a steel helmet
And a sub-machine gun,
That enralls teenage boys?

Even in the mind of a teenager,
There can be fascination
With destruction & death.

I recall from my childhood,
A stream of war movies.
World War I and World War II
Were fought in black and white:

Paths of Glory, All Quiet on the Western Front, Sands of Iowa Jima, Sahara, Steel Helmet, Battle Ground, The Bridge, Stalingrad, Pork Chop Hill, Retreat Hell!

Seven years of Cold War
Soldiering, four years in Germany:
The Iron Curtain, Lebanon Crisis,
Berlin Crisis, Berlin Wall, Cuban Missile
Crisis. Thank God, I missed Vietnam!
Wars are fought in color now:

Platoon, Off Limits, Flight of the Intruder, Full Metal Jacket, Apocalypse Now, The Killing Fields.

The latest generation of
Young men and women,
Wage war in Iraq & Afghanistan,
Over and over and over again.
Which Middle Eastern or African
Nation will we invade next time?
Iran? Pakistan? Yemen? Sudan?

The beat goes on ...
The greed goes on ...
The pain goes on ...

*Three Kings, Green Zone,
The Hurt Locker, Restrepo,*

*The War Tapes,
In the Valley of Elah*

Even in the minds of old men
There is a fascination
With destruction & death.

—Joe Michaud
Iowa City, 6/8/2012

Early Childhood *Military* Education?

by Ann Pelo

Does our national security rely on top-quality early childhood education?

Yes, say the military leaders of Mission: Readiness, an organization led by retired military commanders that promotes investment in education, child health, and parenting support. In March 2011, Mission: Readiness released national and state-by-state education briefs, declaring that “high-quality early education is not only important for the children it benefits but also critical to ensuring our military’s long-term readiness...Investing in high-quality early education is a matter of national security.”

Actually, the generals are right, but for all the wrong reasons.

They see early childhood education as military readiness training. Mission: Readiness argues that investment in early childhood education for at-risk and low-income children will pay off in higher graduation rates and lower incarceration rates — expanding the pool of potential military recruits. “Recruitment and retention challenges could return if America does not do a better job now of producing more young men

and women qualified for service,” says the mission statement on the organization’s website. “We must ensure America’s national security by supporting interventions that will prepare young people for a life of military service and productive citizenship.”

Who are the young people for whom these military leaders are supposedly advocating? Low-income, at-risk children — the pool of children from which the military has traditionally recruited. What sort of education do the generals want for these children? Skill-and-drill, standards-driven, assessment-burdened curriculum that prepares children for skill-and-drill basic training, for standards-driven military discipline, for test-based military promotion. The generals’ aim is to prepare low-income children to be soldiers, trained from their youngest years to follow directions and to comply with the strictures issued by the ranking authority. That’s not high-quality education; that’s utilitarian education designed to serve military and economic needs.



Photographer Mike Hastie’s caption: “County fair in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho 1999. Military recruiter putting camouflage on young boys. The flip chart just happened to be in the background, I added the opinion.”

(UN Committee from page 1)

While the United States is one of only three countries, along with Somalia and South Sudan, not to have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it has ratified and made part of its law the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which requires special protections for any military recruits under the age of 18.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has asked for additional information related to the Second Periodic Report of the United States to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, (OPAC). The United States has until November 16, 2012, to respond. The Committee cites concerns regarding the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs operating in U.S. schools, the recruiting provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a test administered to 660,000 children in 14,000 U.S. high schools each year.

The Protocol calls for the recruitment of minors to be done with the “informed consent of the child’s parents or legal guardians.” Two programs operate in U.S. high schools that clearly violate this section of the treaty. One is the administration of ASVAB. The other is the No Child Left

Behind Act’s requirement that schools provide recruiters with children’s names and contact information. The law lacks any mechanism to enforce a requirement that schools offer parents a way to opt out.

“Our military,” said Bolger, “spends billions of our dollars every year on advertising and recruitment. We have rallies that combine the military with Cub Scouts, complete with giant inflatable soldiers entertaining the kids. We send impressive uniformed officers into kindergartens. We send recruiters into schools where the vast majority of the students are minors. Our military sponsors NASCAR race cars, flies jets over football games, and invests in Hollywood movies and video games that make killing look like the coolest and most extreme sporting event. Students are tested in many of our public schools, and the results fed to recruiters without the knowledge of the students or their parents. We invest so much in recruitment of every

This approach to education may prepare young people for a life of military service, but it certainly does not prepare them for citizenship. The

Mission: Readiness statement of purpose unwittingly exposes a central conundrum in the organization’s thinking: “The earliest months and years of life are a crucial time when we build the foundation of children’s character, how they relate to others and how they learn.”

Exactly. High-quality early childhood education teaches for citizenship, not for test taking and reductionist assessment. The goal is not compliance but creativity, critical thinking, and compassion. Children are invited to engage meaningful questions in collaboration with others, to embrace complexity, to strive for the well-being of others with generosity, to pay attention to issues of fairness, and to act with courage, conviction, and imagination. Top-flight early education fosters in children dispositions toward empathy, ecological consciousness, engaged inquiry, and collaboration. These are the dispositions of citizens.

Citizens care for their country and its security. They inhabit the commons and they act on behalf of the common good.

They are emboldened by personal sovereignty and know themselves to be protagonists in the unfolding history of their country — not passive observers, not dull-minded consumers, not obedient followers of military or government direction, but patriots acting for the good of the commonwealth. Active citizens, thinking critically and compassionately, resist military action as the quick and easy answer to complex challenges. They point out the horrifying absurdity of the idea of “collateral damage.” They fight against imperialism and work for justice nationally and internationally.

This is the citizenship that our nation needs at this juncture in our evolution. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a gulf slicked with oil, pristine lands on the chopping block for drilling and mining, health care out of reach for nearly a third of our people, unions under siege by state governments and by corporations — our nation needs citizens concerned with national security, with the well-being of our nation. There is much work to be done, and it will take citizens, not soldiers, to do it.

So, yes, because high-quality early childhood education prepares children to be citizens, it is essential to national security. The investment should and must be a national priority.

Ann Pelo has a master’s degree in Child Development and Family Studies and taught for 16 years. She edited Rethinking Early Childhood Education and co-authored That’s Not Fair: A Teacher’s Guide to Activism with Young Children. This article first appeared at Rethinking Schools (www.rethinkingschools.org).

of any investigation conducted into the killing of children reported by UNAMA [the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan] over the reporting period.”

The committee requests that the United States provide information on children detained since 2008 and currently held in U.S. prisons in Afghanistan, as well as on particular children who have been imprisoned at Guantanamo, including Omar Kadr and Mohammed Jawad.

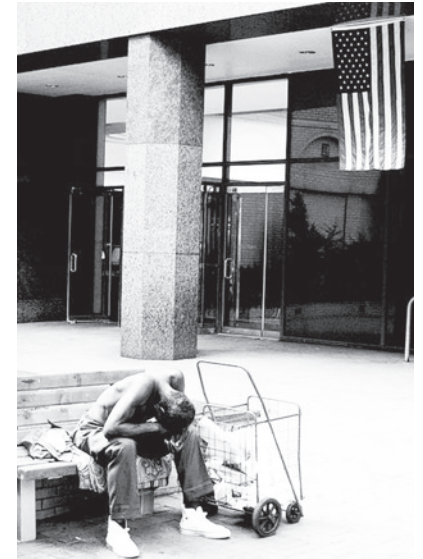
“That the United Nations continues to raise these concerns is heartening,” said Bolger. “But the international community can hardly keep up with the changes in U.S. policies and attitudes. President Obama has targeted and killed children, including U.S. citizens, with drone strikes, as part of a program already objected to by another branch of the United Nations.

Have we no shame? As we contemplate new wars justified in the name of human rights, have we, at long last, no remaining shame?”

David Swanson blogs at davidswanson.org and warisacrime.org and hosts Talk Nation Radio, a half-hour weekly broadcast syndicated by Pacifica Network.

“That we are doing this to children is beyond outrageous.”

HOW IS THE WAR ECONOMY WORKING FOR YOU?



Homeless man in New York City sits under American flag. (C.G.P. Grey photo)

Budgeting as if security really mattered

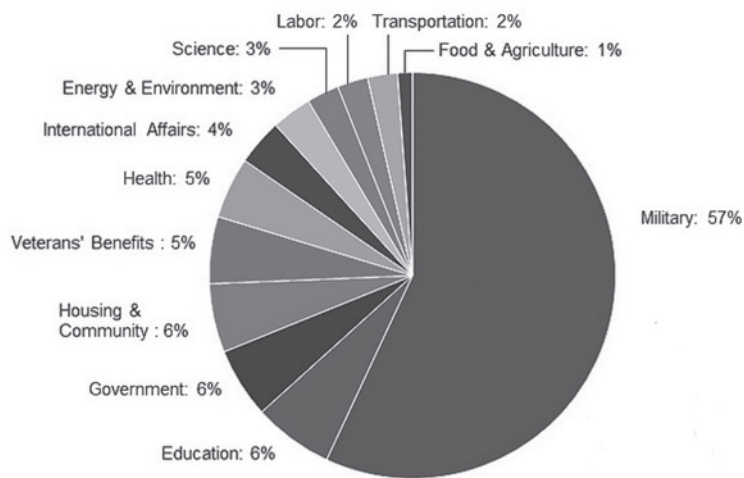
...if we were to start afresh today, forget what we inherited from the last century, and were to sit down with a pad of paper and make a list of principle threats to the future of civilization, that list would include climate change, population growth, spreading water shortages, rising food prices, growing political instability and failing states....defense against armed aggression wouldn't be anywhere near the top of that list. It might make the top 10, but it wouldn't make the top five.

Then when we look at the costs of stabilizing population, eradicating poverty, reforestation, soil conservation, raising water productivity, and so on, it comes to an additional \$200 billion of expenditures per year. Now, that's a lot. But it is only one-third of the U.S. military budget and less than one-seventh of the global military budget.

—Lester Brown
President
Earth Policy Institute

Discretionary Federal Spending Pie for 2013

Source: National Priorities Project nationalpriorities.org



Tax the rich and end the wars. That's how we fix the deficit. And all this obfuscation with percentages of GDP, this is just trying to confuse the issue. The answer is very obvious. The vast majority of the public wants you to tax the rich, end the wars. We spend more on war spending than the rest of the world combined. And this history of this vast, grotesque spending on wars and the war machine—has depleted the base of this economy. And we would have enough money for housing and health care and everything that we wanted if we stopped

spending our money on this black hole of the military machine. It's very obvious. I speak for the 99 percent. End the wars and tax the rich.

—Leah Bolger, VFP President and former U.S. Navy Commander, interrupting congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction hearing on October 26, 2011

Free and responsible government by popular consent just can't exist without an informed public.

—Bill Moyers

Guess what percent of Americans know that military spending is increasing

by David Swanson

And keep guessing some more, because pollsters are unlikely to ask that question.

A year and a half ago, a poll found that Americans drastically underestimate how high U.S. military spending is. This fits with consistent polling showing slim majority support for cutting military spending, but strong support for major military cuts when the people polled are told what the current budget it.

Setting aside, however, the absolute size of the U.S. military budget, its size in comparison to the rest of the world's militaries, or its size in comparison to the rest of the federal budget, are people able to process the fact that it's been growing every year for the past 15 years — in the face of the steady news reports that it's shrinking?

I doubt it.

(The Office of Management and Budget claims that military spending is low as a percentage of GDP. But the idea that we should spend more on war because we can is probably best left to psychiatrists to handle.)

Meanwhile, three GOP senators are touring the country warning that mythical military cuts will endanger us and hurt our socialistic jobs program.

Here are some basic facts missing from the discussion:

Money invested in non-military programs (or even in tax cuts for non-billionaires) creates more jobs than does military spending, enough to justify the expense of a conversion program to retrain and retool.

In much of the world, spending money on killing people in order to produce jobs is viewed as sociopathic.

Candidate Obama promised to increase military spending and size and President Obama has done so.

Military spending — in the Department of so-called "Defense" and in other departments, including "Homeland Security," Energy, State, etc., plus increased secret budgets and the militarization of the CIA — has increased dramatically in the past decade, totaling well over a trillion dollars a year now.

In July, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to limit next year's DOD spending to last year's level, with some loopholes. Making use of the loopholes, the House increased spending by over \$1 billion.

Last year's Budget Control Act, and the failure of the Super Congress, requires minimal cuts to military spending, but Congress is proceeding in violation of its own law.

When we're told that cuts have already happened, usually what has been cut is future dream budgets. But cutting the Pentagon's wish list can still leave it with more than it had before.

When we're told that big numbers will be cut, such as \$500 billion "over 10 years," this means that cutting \$50 billion out of the budget sounds bigger if you multiply it by 10. That's all it means.

The U.S. military costs roughly what all other nations spend on their militaries combined, and more than the rest of U.S. discretionary spending combined. This, combined with tax cuts for billionaires and corporations, or either factor alone, explains why many poorer nations have better schools, parks, energy systems, and infrastructure.

The U.S. military has troops in more nations each year, and bases in more nations each year. It continues to be more privatized and more profitable each year. It has not been, and refuses to be, audited.

Drone strikes in nations where no other type of war was underway or contemplated are an escalation of violence, not a reduction.

For less than 10 percent of U.S. military spending, we could make state college tuition free. Americans with college educations are more likely to . . .

- 1) have job options other than the military
- 2) oppose obscene levels of military spending
- 3) be able to grasp that often the truth is the opposite of what the television keeps saying.

David Swanson's books include When the World Outlawed War and War Is A Lie. He works for the online activist organization rootsaction.org and hosts Talk Nation Radio. Follow him on Twitter: @davidcswanson and FaceBook.

Democracies Don't Start Wars, But Fake Democracies Sure Do!

by Dave Lindorff

“People get to vote once every two and four years to chose from a narrow list of pre-selected candidates approved by the real rulers of the country, who are the wealthy owners of the large business interests, many of which prosper when there’s a war on.”

We’ve all heard it said by our teachers when we were in school, we’ve all heard it said by politicians, including presidents: “Democracies don’t start wars.”

And yet we have had the decades-long American war on Vietnam, the Reagan invasion of Grenada, the LBJ invasion of the Dominican Republic, the George H.W. Bush invasion of Panama, the G.W. Bush back-to-back invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and now we have President Obama talking about launching an unprovoked war on Iran.

Is the much touted axiom wrong?

I don’t think so. I believe that in a democracy, where the will of the people is paramount, it would be very unlikely to have a country start a war. People generally don’t like war. They need to feel truly threatened or even under attack before they will accept the idea of their or anyone’s fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons (and now mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters) being marched off to face the horrors of war.

Clearly the reason we have seen the U.S. starting so many wars is that the U.S.

is not, and for a very long time has not been, anything approaching a democracy.

Democracy in the U.S. is a purely formalistic thing. People get to vote once every two and four years to chose from a narrow list of pre-selected candidates approved by the real rulers of the country, who are the wealthy owners of the large business interests, many of which prosper when there’s a war on, and many more of which are happy to have periodic wars, or the threat of wars, to keep people in line and willing to tolerate the kind of abuse that is typically heaped on the average working person: financially starved school districts, starvation-level welfare grants, no public health system, rusting bridges, potholed roads, almost no public transit, and falling real wages, etc.

I think it’s largely true that real democracies do not start wars, but the endless string of wars, big and small started by the U.S., particularly since the end of the Second World War, provide ample evidence that this country of ours has long since ceased to be democratic. In both domestic and foreign policy, the federal government does not reflect the true wishes of the broad public. If it did, polls suggest



that we would have a much smaller military; we’d have a well-funded Social Security retirement program and Medicare for all, with better benefits; we’d have low-cost college education for all; we’d have clean air and water; we’d have serious action to combat global climate change; we’d have job programs to employ the jobless and policies to prevent the tax-subsidized shipping away of jobs to Mexico, China, and elsewhere; we’d have a much more progressive tax structure with the rich paying much higher tax rates; and we’d have bankers behind bars and breaking rocks. We’d also have legal marijuana, guaranteed paid vacations, solid protections for union organizing, unfettered abortion rights, and good schools for all our kids.

These are the things that the public has said it wants. It does not want wars, and by solid majorities, it has said it wants the military to be scaled back, and American troops brought home.

As founding father James Madison once said:

Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few. In war, too, the discretionary power of the Executive is extended; its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied; and all the means of seducing the minds are added to those of subduing the force of the people. The same malignant aspect in republicanism may be traced in the inequality of fortunes and the opportunities of fraud growing out of a state of war, and in the degeneracy of manners and of morals engendered by both. No nation could reserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.

Boy, did Madison nail it!

We have been having a state of continual warfare, and we in the U.S. have seen all the above evils growing apace, to the point that the country today is barely recognizable as the one that was founded in 1776, or that came out of the Civil War in 1865, or that survived the Great Depression in the ‘30s. Our freedoms are vanishing, working people are being legally robbed by the rich, and our votes are a joke.

The answer clearly is that we have to stop the wars, stop the war-mongering, and slash the military down to a fraction of its current size or eliminate standing armies altogether. Then we can maybe get our democracy back, and have a hope of proving that the old axiom was right all along.

Dave Lindorff is an award-winning American investigative journalist. He graduated from Wesleyan University in 1972 with a BA in Chinese language and then received an MS in Journalism from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1975. He served for five years as a correspondent for Hong Kong and China. He is a founder of the online newspaper www.ThisCantBeHappening.net.

U.S. Shows “stunning cowardice” as it sets arms sales record

U.N. Arms Treaty Talks Fail Before Deadline

The United Nations failed to meet a deadline [in July] for the first-ever global agreement regulating the arms trade. Hopes had been raised for a last-minute deal, but the negotiations collapsed without the required consensus. Arms control advocates heavily criticized the Obama administration, which demanded a number of exemptions and ultimately said it needed more time to review the proposals. White House officials had cited the need to protect Second Amendment rights in the United States, despite U.N. assurances the treaty text would not interfere. In a statement, Amnesty International said the United States had shown “stunning cowardice,” adding: “It’s a staggering abdication of leadership by the world’s largest exporter of conventional weapons to pull the plug on the talks just as they were nearing an historic breakthrough.” The United States is now under new pressure to revive the talks to reach a deal before the U.N. General Assembly this fall.

U.S. Foreign Weapons Sales at Record in 2012

As the global arms treaty talks collapsed at the United Nations, a top State Department official openly bragged that U.S. government efforts have helped boost foreign military sales to record levels this year. Speaking to a group of military reporters, Andrew Shapiro, the assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, said: “We’ve really upped our game in terms of advocating on behalf of U.S. companies. I’ve got the frequent-flyer miles to prove it.” According to Shapiro, U.S. arms sales have already topped \$50 billion in fiscal 2012, putting the United States on pace to increase its total for the year by 70 percent.

— from Democracy Now! headlines of 07/30/2012

The desire of arms manufacturers to make profits is a standing menace to world peace. It is in their interest to work for policies which are likely to produce dangerous international situations and to work against disarmament and the establishment of world peace, which would spoil their trade.

**--Aldous Huxley,
*An Encyclopedia of
Pacifism, 1937***

At the Precipice of War: U.S. Military Build-Up Accelerates in the Persian Gulf

by Ben Schreiner

The familiar menace of U.S. war drums have resumed at a fevered pitch, as Iran finds itself once again firmly within the Pentagon's cross hairs.

According to multiple reports, the U.S. is currently in the midst of a massive military build-up in the Persian Gulf on a scale not seen in the region since prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. The military surge reportedly

officially recently let slip to the *New York Times*: "This is not only about Iranian nuclear ambitions, but about Iran's regional hegemonic ambitions." In other words, it is about removing one of the last irritants to U.S. power projection in the resource-rich Middle East.

Of course, Iran already finds itself under siege from a lethal trifecta comprised of U.S.-led cyber attacks, Israeli-led assassinations, and oppressive Western economic sanctions. The latter of which has left ordinary Iranians to confront a toxic mix of ballooning inflation and rampant unemployment. In short, as Conn Hallinan writes at CounterPunch, the West is "already at war with Iran."

The question, then, is just how far this "war by other means" shall ultimately escalate?



Indeed, this enduring allure of war has already reared its ugly head amidst the current crisis.

The colonial smash-and-grab that was the 2011 NATO intervention into Libya, as Alexander Cockburn deemed it, was our first evidence that Western elites have settled on war as a means to resolve the current intractable capitalist crisis. But the spoils from Libya have proven to be insufficient to revive growth stymied since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis.

A heavily sanctioned Iran, on the other hand, boasts a GDP over five times larger than pre-"liberated" Libya, while also sitting atop the world's third largest oil reserves and the second largest natural gas reserves. A defeated and placated Iran able to be enveloped more fully into the U.S.-dominated capitalist system thus holds great potential for global capitalism's needed regeneration. Of course, in seizing control over Iran's energy resources, the U.S. and its allies would also come to possess a monopoly over the Middle East's energy resources – a strategic key in any future conflict with rivals Russia and China.

And so it is that, under the imperative of renewing global capitalism, the U.S. swiftly amasses its military hardware to the Persian Gulf under the cloak of combating nuclear proliferation. The accompanying talk of military hostilities and of using "all options" against Tehran by elites in Washington thus ought not to be taken as idle threats.

Clearly, we stand at the very precipice of outright war.

Ben Schreiner is a freelance writer covering U.S. and international politics. Contact him at bnschreiner@gmail.com.

The Drone and the Bomb

by Ed Kinane

The lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki belong always before us. The agony of those two cities must remain our dark beacon.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki weren't so much about targets as about audiences.

We – or rather, the very highest reaches of the U.S. government – annihilated a couple hundred thousand nameless, unarmed, undefended human beings to warn the world: "Don't mess with us; we run things now."

Thanks to its atomic prowess – showcased at Hiroshima and Nagasaki – for over 65 years the U.S. has been able to hold the planet hostage. It deploys nuclear blackmail to further its corporations' grip on the world's resources and markets. But such gunboat diplomacy has only partially succeeded.

The Soviets soon acquired the Bomb. For nearly four decades that other evil empire terrorized us here in our previously invincible Homeland. So the pitiless logic of proliferation made us all far less safe.

The Big Lie(s)

Every August 6, letters to editors perpetuate the last century's most enduring myth: the Bomb forced the fanatic, loathsome Japs to surrender. Japan would not have to be invaded. Thousands of G.I. lives were thereby saved. Thank God for the Bomb!

Never mind that by spring 1945, the U.S. Air Force ruled Japanese skies. Never mind that after merciless firebombing, Japan's major cities now lay in ashes, their people incinerated. Never mind that the U.S. Navy ruled the sea; not a grain of rice could penetrate its blockade. Never mind that Japan was totally depleted by years of war. Never mind that Japan had already been seeking surrender.



Technology for the battlefield
HICKAM AFB, Hawaii – Senior Airman Stephanie Pitassi conducts quality control during a training mission at a distributed ground station for the Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. Unmanned aerial vehicles represent a new way of using technology to remotely affect the battlefield. (USAF photo)

Mr. Truman and the generals could have accepted Japan's one nonnegotiable demand: to treat its divine emperor with respect. Alternatively, they could have let Japan dangle for as long as it took and then swept in to feed the emaciated and bury the dead.

Afghanistan/Pakistan/Yemen echo Hiroshima/Nagasaki. With its new cutting edge technology the Pentagon still trots out the old myth: the Reaper drone is all about "saving our boys' lives." And Bomb-like, the Reaper proclaims: "If you defy us, wherever you are, we will hunt you down and kill you." Déjà vu.

Once again, clandestinely and without referendum, the Pentagon has embarked on a new era of terror.

Once again, clandestinely and without referendum, the Pentagon has embarked on a new era of terror. To add menace to dread, its robotic warfare comes with almost preternatural surveillance...both over there and, soon, here.

For several years the Pentagon has used high-tech robots like the Predator and the Reaper, not only for surveillance, but to blow up people and things in Afghanistan. Defying international law, the CIA uses the Reaper to assassinate nameless "bad guys" in Pakistan. In Yemen, the Reaper perpetrates extrajudicial executions and even hunts down and kills U.S. citizens. That's what happens when your name somehow appears on White House "kill lists" reviewed by Mr. Obama himself.

The "beauty" of it is that technicians, wielding joysticks at satellite-linked computers thousands of miles from combat, pilot these

A global crisis of capitalism greases our current path to war. After all, war enables the forcible opening of new markets...

includes an influx of air and naval forces, ground troops, and even sea drones. Lest one forget, the U.S. already has two aircraft carriers and their accompanying strike groups in the region.

A growing sense of Iran war fever can also be seen mounting in Washington. For instance, in an effort to foil ongoing nuclear negotiations between Iran and the so-called P5+1 (the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany), a bipartisan group of 44 U.S. Senators recently sent a letter to President Obama [see "Neocon War Criminals" on page 4] urging the administration to "focus on significantly increasing the pressure on the Iranian government through sanctions and making clear that a credible military option exists."

Such hawkish posturing occurs despite the fact that the U.S. intelligence community (as well as the Israeli intelligence community, for that matter) finds no evidence that Iran has decided to pursue a nuclear weapon – the ostensible reason behind Western sanctions and threats of attack. Moreover, as an April Pentagon report states, Iran's military doctrine remains one of self-defense, committed to "slow an invasion" and "force a diplomatic solution to hostilities." (Compare this to the U.S. military doctrine rife with notions of global "power projection" and one sees where the credible threat lies.)

The nuclear issue, though, is but a pretext used to veil U.S. imperial designs in the region. As a senior U.S. Defense Department

Towards a Dangerous Escalation

Although punitive economic sanctions are frequently sold as an alternative to war, history is replete with evidence to the contrary. In the end, sanctions are often but a prelude to military hostilities. (One only needs to cross over to Iraq and look at the history of Western sanctions and eventual U.S. invasion.)

In fact, a recent report in the *New York Times* warned of much the same. The current round of Western economic penalties imposed on Iran, the paper wrote, "represent one of the boldest uses of oil sanctions as a tool of coercion since the United States cut off oil exports to Japan in 1940. That experiment did not end well: The Japanese decided to strike before they were weakened."

But much like the attempted torpedoing of Japan's economy prior to the Second World War, the current attempt to bring Iran to its knees via economic sanctions may very well be designed to draw an attack from Iran – thus creating a justification for a full-fledged U.S. military campaign to impose "regime change."

And much the same as in the 1940s, a global crisis of capitalism greases our current path to war. After all, war enables the forcible opening of new markets, along with bounties galore to be wrought via "creative destruction"; both of which are desperately needed for the sustenance of an imperiled economic system predicated on limitless growth and expansion.



Predators strike enemy forces
An MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial vehicle is armed with an AGM-114 Hellfire missile. The Predator's primary mission is interdiction and conducting armed reconnaissance against critical, perishable targets. (USAF photo)

unmanned drones. They can deliver – “with laser accuracy” – their Hellfire missiles and 500-pound bombs. And they do so with scant knowledge of their non-combatant victims and with

no physical risk. Can anything be more disdainful of honor, more disdainful of life?

Mission Creep

The Reaper – piloted from, among other places, our local Hancock Air Base – has become the Pentagon's and the CIA's darling. With no on-board crew, no U.S. personnel die when the Reaper crashes or is hacked or shot down. With few witnesses, with no maimed vets and no awkward body bags shipped home, few ask: Why are

we there? Who benefits? What's our complicity? What's become of our humanity?

So opaque is our bubble, so pervasive is the distancing, so unaccountable is drone warfare, that mission creep is guaranteed. Mission creep: the slide into perpetual warfare.

Like Japan's hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties, the Reaper's civilian casualties in Afghanistan/Pakistan/Yemen fail to matter. Few ask: What's the human cost? What's the blow-back? We forget that victims anywhere surely have survivors nursing enduring hatred for the U.S. But – hey, not to worry! – those further security threats keep the pot boiling. And General Atomics, Lockheed, and other corporate war profiteers continue to reap their billions.

One day drone missiles may strike Hancock Air Base. And if

nearby communities are the U.S. sold six weaponized hit...well, aren't we very accepting of “collateral damage”? Like nuclear proliferation, drone pro-

They deliver – “with laser accuracy” – their Hellfire missiles and 500-pound bombs, with scant knowledge of their non-combatant victims and with no physical risk. Can anything be more disdainful of honor, more disdainful of life?

Thanks to the Pentagon's love affair with death – and thanks to the trillions we squander on “defense” – the world is much safer...for corporate greed. Most dare not allow themselves to see how those military contracts ravage our already depressed economy.

Fifty nations reportedly are either importing or manufacturing their own drones. This past spring

liferation will haunt us till the end of our days.

Unless....

Ed Kinane is an anti-militarism activist based in Syracuse, New York. He's one of the “Hancock 2,” the “Hancock 33,” the “Hancock 15,” and the “Hancock 38.” Reach him at edkinane@verizon.net.

Medea Benjamin's Good War on Predator Drones

by Tom Hayden

After reading Medea Benjamin's *Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control*, I can only wish she will invest more time in writing and less time getting arrested, because there are so few activists with her gifts of research, analysis, and communication. But she wouldn't be Medea without being arrested and pepper-sprayed on one front or another, because she is a true witness in both the Quaker moral sense and as a seeing journalist in the thick of things.

Her new book should be in every activist's backpack and handed to every member of Congress and military affairs reporter. Besides having a direct impact, it will increase the legitimacy of, and broaden the impact of Code Pink for having policy acumen.

Of particular interest is Benjamin's assessment of the prospects for an anti-drone movement, based on interviews in several countries, including veterans of the anti-land mine campaign of the late 1990s, and recent efforts to create oppositional networks, especially in Europe. Here in the U.S. she describes two efforts at building loose

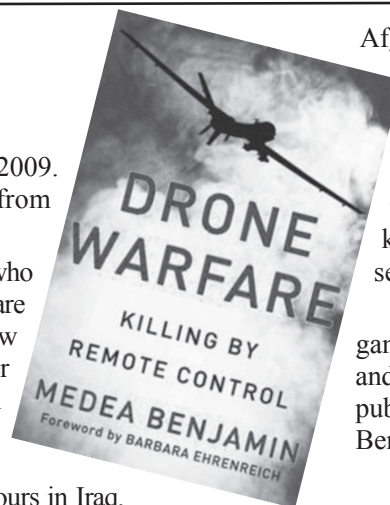
umbrella coalitions since 2009. These are the seedlings from which strong trees grow.

Unlike the view of many who think Predators and Reapers are harbingers of a Brave New World, I think they are better analyzed as weapons chosen for their lethality, invisibility, and low-taxpayer costs by governments in retreat, like ours in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Wars are simply not won by platforms in the sky.

As was proven during the Central American wars, thousands of Americans can be mobilized for peace or solidarity even when U.S. casualties are low and taxpayer costs hidden. Some are mobilized for moral or religious reasons, others out of rage at our government's secret killings, still others from a sense that there will be blow-back. We already see dedicated American networks of

activists protesting and being arrested at the remote locations where the drone strategy is carried out. Millions of Pakistanis regularly take to the streets, their energy fueling the potential presidential campaign of Imran Khan, which Benjamin mentions. (p. 185) And, of course, mainstream journalists inevitably are drawn to uncover state secrets.

And while Benjamin does not describe them as allies, her cause has powerful supporters in the ranks of Long War counterinsurgency strategists like David Kilcullen. They see drones as antagonizing local civilian populations in places like Pakistan, and steering Pentagon policy and funds away from their preferred alternative: counterinsurgency. As a result, they continue to blow the whistle on drones and civilian casualties in



Afghanistan and Pakistan, through their outlets like the Long War Journal and New America Foundation.

As military strategies, both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency are headed for gradual defeat in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As most of the Western troops leave, drones will cover their tracks in blood, keeping insurgents from suddenly seizing power, and serving to protect military and political reputations.

As Leon Panetta famously said, drones “are the only game in town,” but the White House, Justice Department and Pentagon already “acknowledge that they worry about public perception.” (*New York Times*, May 29, 2012). And Benjamin has only just begun.

Barack Obama, the current villain in her narrative, is doing a favor by beginning to open a “public conversation” about this hitherto taboo subject. Now there is no excuse whatsoever for Congressional silence, which Benjamin scathingly condemns. One of her keenest revelations is about the fifty-member “Congressional Unmanned Systems Caucus,” that influences key defense committees to ensure the flow of drone contracts to their home districts. Apparently these politicians are trying to avoid branding as The Predators Caucus. But it seems only a matter of time

(Continued on page 14)



Medea Benjamin is a cofounder of both CODE-PINK and the international human rights organization Global Exchange. She has been an advocate for social justice for more than 30 years. Described as “one of America's most committed – and most effective – fighters for human rights” by *New York Newsday*, and

called “one of the high profile leaders of the peace movement” by the *Los Angeles Times*, Medea has distinguished herself as an eloquent and energetic figure in the progressive movement. In 2005, she was one of 1,000 exemplary women from 140 countries nominated to receive the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the millions of women who do the essential work of peace worldwide. In 2010, she received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Prize from the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

(Source: CodePink.org)



U.S. Drones in Pakistan by Carlos Latuff

The Vietnam War and the Struggle for Truth

by John Grant

Vietnam, a story of virtually unmitigated disasters that we have inflicted on ourselves and even more on others.

—Bernard Brodie, 1973

The Vietnamese won the Vietnam War by forcing the United States to abandon its intention to militarily sustain an artificially divided Vietnam. The history is clear: It was the United States, not the Vietnamese, who scotched the unifying elections agreed on for 1956 in the Geneva negotiations following the French rout at Dien Bien Phu. Why did the U.S. undermine these elections? As Dwight Eisenhower said in his memoir, because everyone knew Ho Chi Minh was going to win in a landslide of the order of 80% of the population of Vietnam.

So much for Democracy.

“We can lose longer than you can win,” was how Ho described the Vietnamese strategy against the Americans. Later in the 1980s, a Vietnamese diplomat put it this way to Robert McNamara: “We knew you would leave because you could leave. We lived here; we couldn’t leave.”

The Vietnam War was finally over in 1975 when the North prevailed over the U.S. proxy formulation known as South Vietnam, which then disappeared as a “nation,” as many thousands of our betrayed Vietnamese allies fled in small boats or were subjected to unpleasant internment camps and frontier development projects deep in the hostile jungles.

In a word, the Vietnam War was a debacle for everyone involved.

Now, we learn the United States government is planning a 13-year propaganda project to clean up the image of the Vietnam War in the minds of Americans. It’s called The Vietnam War Commemoration Project. President Obama officially launched the project on Memorial Day with a speech at the Vietnam Wall in Washington. The Project was established by Section 598 of the 604-page National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Year 2008. It budgets \$5 million a year.

“Some have called this war era a scar on our country,” Obama told the specially invited Vietnam veteran crowd at The Wall. “But here’s what I say. As any wound heals, the tissue around it becomes tougher, becomes stronger than before. And in this sense, finally, we might begin to see the true legacy of Vietnam. Because of Vietnam and our veterans, we now use American power smarter, we honor our military more, we take care of our veterans better. Because of the hard lessons of Vietnam, because of you, America is even stronger than before.”

Vietnam toughened us up, made us better human beings. I would submit the President is wrong on that score, that there are profound lessons we have failed to learn.

Phase One of the Commemoration Project goes through 2014 and “will focus on recruiting support and participation

nationwide. There will inevitably be international, national, regional, state, and local events planned, but a focus will be on the hometown level, where the personal recognitions and thanks are most impactful. The target is to obtain 10,000 Commemorative Partners.” Phase Two, through 2017, will encourage these Partners to commit to two events a year. “The DoD Commemoration Office will develop and host a ‘Master Calendar’ to list all the events, reflecting tens of thousands of events across the nation, as we thank and honor our Vietnam veterans.” Phase Three, from 2017 to 2025, will focus on “sustainment” of the positive legacy established in Phases One and Two and will involve “targeted activities” as deemed necessary.

The planners of the Project decided the Vietnam War began in 1962, which makes 2012 the 50th Anniversary of the start of the war. Just that decision alone exhibits disingenuous calculation. Anyone who has read anything beyond a pop novelization of Rambo knows it’s impossible to understand U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War unless one goes back at least to 1945 and the decision to succumb to Cold War hysteria and support the re-colonization of Vietnam by the French. When you understand how Ho Chi Minh’s Viet Minh soldiers fought side-by-side with U.S. soldiers against the Japanese occupiers of Vietnam, when the Vichy French colonial garrisons were cowed by the Japanese, you begin to understand the profound betrayal at the root of the entire war.

The problem is that understanding is the last thing the Pentagon and the U.S. Government want the American people to wrestle with. If President Obama’s launching language is any indication, the purpose of the Vietnam War Commemoration is to create a malleable and supportive populace for future military operations — especially under the new doctrine of focused killing with drones and special-ops units now being established around the world.

Everyone in Washington knows the post-World War Two behemoth United States faces an inevitable decline vis-à-vis former third world, colonial nations like



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“We cannot allow the rah-rah garbage that appears to be lined up for the well-funded Vietnam War Commemoration Project to prevail without a fight...”

China, India, and Brazil. It’s also clear that globalized actors like al Qaeda — originally our tool and now our enemy — are reacting against our international interventions and will not remain static, but will evolve with our changing tactics. The world is, thus, getting more and more frightening for Americans, especially those who insist on holding on to the good old days of Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism.

It has to do with an insistence on living in a glorious western colonial past, a bubble that’s part historical fact and part illusion and that entails ignoring what the Buddhists call the fundamental impermanence of life or what the Greek Heraclitus meant when he said, “You can’t step into the same river twice.” For an imperialist, these are subversive thoughts.

In our schools and institutions it’s unfortunate that American citizens are rarely taught to understand historical events like the Vietnam War. History is subversive, and our leaders have all become corporate panderers who want what every other pandering leader in history has ever wanted: a compliant populace waving the flag and not asking questions. Thus we have the Vietnam War Commemoration Project.

John Ford’s America

I’m a *cinéaste*, a subversive-sounding French word for film buff. Nothing dramatizes all this quite as perfectly as two iconic John Ford movies, in which the director, a Navy reserve admiral, employs John Wayne as a key player in the patriotic task of burying Truth in American popular history. John Wayne, of course, was key to the imagery that got us into Vietnam. Wayne even co-directed and starred in the 1968 patriotic clunker *The Green Berets*. For those who question the relevance of classic film to American political meta-narrative, one need only mention Ronald Reagan who rose to power by confusing the two realms.

The two Ford movies are *Fort Apache* in 1947 and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* in 1962. The former is a cavalry and Indians story and the latter is a gun-fighter and bad man story. Ford was an amazing director and both are excellent fiction films that reinforce Manifest Destiny and American cultural values — to the point of necessarily burying unpleasant truths and encouraging popular legends.

At the end of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, a newspaper editor learns that dude lawyer Jimmy Stewart really didn’t shoot the bad gunman Liberty Valance, played by Lee Marvin. The shooting of Valance in a western town at night made Stewart famous and got him elected a U.S. senator. The editor learns that gun-fighter John Wayne knew Valance would kill his tenderfoot pal Stewart, so Wayne had dry-gulched Valance with a rifle from a nearby alley.

The question is, will the editor spill the beans and destroy good guy Stewart’s senatorial career. In what is now an iconic line, the editor says: “This is the West, sir. When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.”

Both the official and popular histories of the Vietnam War are rife with this kind of slippage. The emotional emphasis on anti-war activists “spitting” on soldiers and the emphasis on the heroics of individual soldiers in Vietnam are just two examples. In both cases, the larger, historical realities are buried in favor of popularly endorsed and highly publicized narratives on an individual and personal level. The fact anti-war activists were actually opposing LBJ, Robert McNamara, Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and the cruel and insidious war they and the institutions they controlled were determined to escalate is lost in the cynical, patriotic focus on individual heroism.

Fort Apache is a perfect analogy for the Vietnam War. John Wayne is a cavalry captain in Apache country; he’s a good soldier who respects Cochise and his braves. At this point, along comes Henry Fonda as a tight-ass lieutenant colonel taking command of the garrison; he resents being sent with his teenage daughter Shirley Temple to this smelly armpit of the world — in this case, Ford’s favorite location, the incredibly austere Monument Valley in Utah.

Besides the grand-scale scenes of precise cavalry units advancing on horseback amongst the mesas and desert tabletops, there's the usual John Ford cotillion dances with officers in formal uniforms and ladies in gowns that are simply preposterous for the frontier. And there's the usual male camaraderie and buffoonery amongst the enlisted men centered on drinking to lighten things up. Plus a Romeo and Juliet romance between upper class Temple and the fresh West Point 2nd lieutenant son of grizzled Sergeant Major Ward Bond, a Civil War Medal of Honor winner.

Fonda wants to reestablish military discipline at the fort and to regain the glory he once had as a general in the Civil War. (It seems rank was shuffled considerably once that conflagration was over.) He also wants to rip into the savages who caused him this ignoble assignment.

Fonda reluctantly allows Wayne to go with only a Spanish translator to talk with Cochise unarmed in his stronghold. (Cochise speaks Spanish but not English.) Wayne and Cochise get on smartly and agree that Cochise can resettle in his former lands. But Fonda has different plans. He dismisses Wayne's agreement and orders the garrison to mount up to meet Cochise. To Wayne, it's a loathsome betrayal.

The Apaches have the U.S. cavalry outnumbered ten to one. But this doesn't phase the madman Fonda. He orders the recalcitrant Wayne to guard the wagons and orders a frontal attack that takes his troops right into an Apache ambush that Wayne warned him was there.

Fonda is shot off his horse, and Wayne rides like the wind to save the wounded officer. But Fonda shoves him away and mounts Wayne's horse to join his encircled men, now in a formation that resembles images of Custer's Last Stand. Fonda apologizes to Bond, who makes a jovial crack about their future grandchildren. Then they're all killed by the infuriated Apaches.

Cut to Wayne back behind the wagons, awaiting the advancing savages. A lone rider comes up and, as Wayne goes out unarmed to meet him, the rider angrily slams the garrison colors into the dirt at Wayne's feet. Cochise has let his paleface amigo live for another day.

Then there's a break and its some years later. Wayne is now a colonel, and he's engaged with some reporters in his office. There's a dignified, formal portrait of the Fonda character on the wall. The reporters all want to hear about the glory of Fonda's now famous fatal charge. Wayne plays along and passes on the legend of the great man. Then he goes outside and leads his troops on a stirring march out of the compound. The end.

The fact that the arrogance and incompetence of the Fonda character – and his blatant betrayal of a negotiated agreement he had sent an officer out to obtain at significant risk – had caused the loss of much of his garrison is simply swept under the rug. Truth is secondary to institutional

integrity. Wayne has now realized on which side his bread is buttered and that his career is not about negotiating with savages. Geronimo was pointedly introduced earlier in the meeting with Cochise. To protect the women folk and advancing civilization on the frontier, Wayne now has the guerrilla Geronimo to clean up.

As well-wrought film art, one can see *Fort Apache* in two ways – as glorifying Manifest Destiny and the extermination of Native Americans or as explaining the process of how truth is the first casualty of war and, if we let it happen, a permanent casualty of permanent war.

The Truth Will Set Us Free

A friend of mine just gave me three boxes of books on the Vietnam War to add to my collection; and I'm always looking for more in thrift shops and used book stores. Chris Hedges says we're becoming an illiterate culture attuned to spectacle. That may be true, but I'm not going to be one of Orwell's proles in such an equation. The point is, we in the antiwar movement – especially those of us who are Vietnam veterans and still read – have a responsibility to make sure the national record is complete. Bernard Brodie was right in 1973 in his mature, analytic book *War and Politics* when he said Vietnam was "a story of virtually unmitigated disasters that we have inflicted on ourselves and even more on others." Nothing has changed in the past 39 years, and a well-funded Pentagon propaganda campaign won't affect that truth.

I'll be the first to concede honor and bravery exist even in a lousy, unnecessary and cruel war like the one in Vietnam. But we cannot allow the rah-rah garbage that appears to be lined up for the well-funded Vietnam War Commemoration Project to prevail without a fight – even if that fight is asymmetrical and has to be fought in guerrilla mode with rhetorical jujitsu and even strains of Dada absurdity if necessary.

The fact is, there are two sides to the Vietnam War, and the one that says the war was not necessary needs to be heard loud and clear and needs to be respected. Plus, it needs to be made clear to Americans that the Vietnamese endured vastly more pain and suffering than any of us did.

The poet W. D. Ehrhart was a young Marine infantryman in the war. He was wounded there. He returned to Vietnam in 1985 and wrote about his trip, about the good things and about meeting Mrs. Na who lost five sons to The American War. As he is led into her modest peasant home, she looks at him. "I have suffered so much misery," she tells him, "and you did this to me."

Bigger than life John Wayne and American Flag

(photo credit: J K Johnson who writes: This sculpture of John Wayne is in the Orange County airport in Santa Ana, California. It is 9 feet tall and was created by Robert Summers in 1982 - the huge flag was added years later.



“John Wayne was key to the imagery that got us into Vietnam. Wayne even co-directed and starred in the 1968 patriotic clunker *The Green Berets*. For those who question the relevance of classic film to American political meta-narrative, one need only mention Ronald Reagan who rose to power by confusing the two realms.”

Ehrhart wants to flee the little house and vomit in the road. The incident reminds him of a poem he had written earlier called “Making the Children Behave.”

*Do they think of me now
in those strange Asian villages
where nothing ever seemed
quite human
but myself
and my few grim friends
moving through them
hunched
in lines?*

*When they tell stories to their children
of the evil
that awaits misbehavior
is it me they conjure?*

It takes great humanity and courage to get to a place like Ehrhart has reached. John Ford would not have understood the need to recognize the truths Ehrhart and other vets have tried to tell Americans, though many Americans, like *Platoon* director Oliver Stone, certainly do. The Pentagon and the U.S. government do not want to encourage such difficult truths when they need young soldiers for future wars that may, like Vietnam and Iraq, turn out to be tragic debacles.

In another poem, Ehrhart poignantly addresses the human problem of sending young men to fight delusional and unnecessary wars. It's called “Guerrilla War.”

*It's practically impossible
to tell civilians
from the Vietcong.*

Nobody wears uniforms.

*They all talk
the same language,
(and you couldn't understand them
even if they didn't).*

*They tape grenades
inside their clothes,
and carry satchel charges
in their market baskets.*

*Even their women fight,
and young boys,
and girls.*

*It's practically impossible
to tell civilians
from the Vietcong.*

*After awhile,
you quit trying.*

John Grant is a veteran, a writer, and a photographer. At age 19, he was a radio direction finder in Vietnam, working in the mountains west of Pleiku to locate enemy radio operators. After returning to the U.S., he read and learned what the war was really about. John, a member of Veterans For Peace since 1985, did documentary photography in Central America during the wars there and has traveled twice to the war zone in Iraq. He has taught creative writing in a Philadelphia prison for ten years.

Mad, Bad, Sad

(Continued from page 1)

Theoretically, whole countries go to war, not just their soldiers, but not this time. Civilian sympathy for “the troops” may be just one more way for us to avoid a real reckoning with our last decade-plus of war, when the hostilities in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown up on the average American’s radar only if somebody screws up or noticeable numbers of Americans get killed. The veterans at the heart of this story – victims, heroes, it doesn’t matter – struggle to reconcile what they did in those countries with the “service” we keep thanking them for. We can see them as sick, with

The best way to prevent PTSD and other war-caused psychic distress is not to put soldiers in such untenable situations in the first place.

all the stigma, neediness, and expense that entails, or we can recognize them as human beings, confronting the morality of what they’ve done in our name and what they’ve seen and come to know – even as they try to move on.

Sacred Wounds, Moral Injuries

Former Army staff sergeant Andy Sapp spent a year at Forward Operating Base Speicher near Tikrit, Iraq, and has lived for the past six years with PTSD. Seven, if you count the year he refused to admit that he had it because he never left the base or fired his weapon, and who was he to suffer when others had it so much worse? Nearly 50 when he deployed, he was much older than most of his National Guard unit. He had put in 17 years in various branches of the military, had a stable family, strong religious ties, a good education, and a satisfying career as a high school English teacher. He expected all that to insulate him, so it took a while to realize that the whole time he was in Iraq, he was numb. In the end, he would be diagnosed with PTSD and given an 80% disability rating, which, among other benefits, entitles him to sessions with a Veterans Administration psychologist, whom he credits with saving his life.

Andy recalls a 1985 BBC series called “Soldiers” in which a Marine commander says, “It’s not that we can’t take a man who’s 45 years old and turn him into a good soldier. It’s that we can’t make him love it.” Like many soldiers, Andy had assumed that his role would be to protect his country when it was threatened. Instead, he now considers himself part of “something evil.” So at a point when his therapy stalled and his therapist suggested that his spiritual pain was exacerbating his psychological pain, it suddenly clicked. The spiritual part he now calls his sacred wound. Others call it “moral injury.”

It’s a concept in progress, defined as the result of taking part in or witnessing something of consequence that you find wrong,

something which violates your deeply held beliefs about yourself and your role in the world. For a moment, at least, you become what you never wanted to be. While the symptoms and causes may overlap with PTSD, moral injury arises from what you did or failed to do, rather than from what was done to you. It’s a sickness of the heart more than the head. Or, possibly, moral injury is what comes first and, if left unattended, can congeal into PTSD.

What we now call PTSD goes way back. In *Odysseus in America*, psychiatrist (and MacArthur “genius” grantee) Jonathan Shay has traced similar symptoms to Homer’s account of Odysseus’s homecoming from the Trojan War. The idea that a soldier may continue to be haunted by his

wartime life has had a name since at least the Civil War. It was called “soldier’s heart” then, a lovely name for a terrible affliction.

In World War I, it went by the names “shell shock” and “war neurosis” and was so widespread that Britain devoted 19 hospitals solely to treating soldiers who suffered from it. During WWII, it was called “battle fatigue,” “combat neurosis,” or “gross stress reaction,” and the problem was severe enough in the U.S. Army that, at one point, psychiatric discharges outpaced new recruits. The Vietnam War gave us the term “post-Vietnam syndrome,” which in time evolved into PTSD, and eventually the insight that, whatever its name, it is probably neurologically based.

PTSD’s status as an anxiety disorder – and as the only mental health condition officially defined as caused by a single, external event – was established in 1980, when it was enshrined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the bible of psychiatry. The diagnostic criteria have expanded since then and will probably be altered again in next year’s version of the DSM. That troubles many therapists treating the ailment; some don’t think PTSD is a disease, others argue that the symptoms are just a natural response to being at war or that, in labeling it a disorder, political and cultural norms are being invoked to reinforce what is considered orderly. As Katherine Boone, writing in the *Wilson Quarterly*, put it, “If you react normally to trauma, you have a disorder; if you act abnormally, you don’t.”

Most PTSD is short term, but perhaps one-third of cases become chronic, and those are the ones we keep hearing about, in part because it costs a lot to treat them. For a variety of reasons, no one seems to have an exact number of recent combat veterans with PTSD. The Veterans Administration estimates that between 11% and 20% of the 2.3 million troops who have

cycled through Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from it, and the Congressional Budget Office calculates a cost of \$8,300 per patient for the first year of treatment. Do the math, and you could be talking about as much as \$3.8 billion a year. (What we’re not talking about nearly enough is the best way to prevent PTSD and other war-caused psychic distress, which is not to put soldiers in such untenable situations in the first place.)

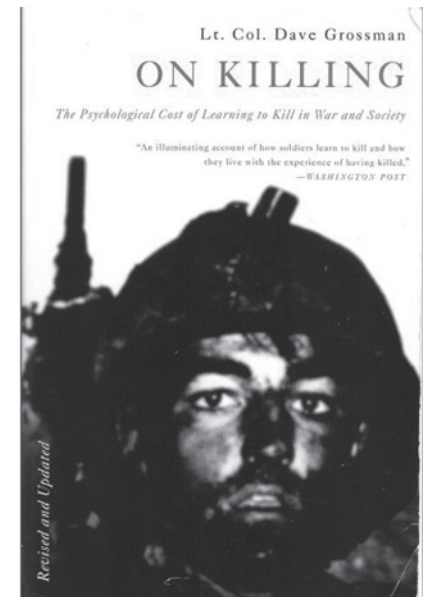
Since the early days of diagnosis – when you were either sick with PTSD or you were fine – the medical response to it has gained in nuance and depth, which has brought beneficial funding for research and treatment. In the public mind, though, PTSD still scoops up everything from risky behavior and aggression to substance abuse and suicide – kind of the way “Alzheimer’s” as a catch-all label stands in for forgetfulness over age 50 – and that does a disservice to veterans who aren’t sick, but aren’t fine either.

“What you come into the war with will dictate how you come out of war,” Joshua Casteel testified about a soldier’s conscience at the Truth Commission on Conscience and War, which convened in New York in March 2010. He had spent five months as an interrogator at Abu Ghraib shortly after the prisoner abuse scandal broke there. He later left the Army as a conscientious objector after an impassioned conversation about faith and duty with a young Saudi jihadist, whom he was supposed to be questioning, led him to conclude that he could no longer do his job. Casting a soldier’s experience as unfathomable to anyone else was not only inaccurate, but also damaging, he said; he had never felt lonelier than when people were afraid to ask about his life during the war.

Our warriors today are all volunteers who signed up and are apparently supposed to put up with whatever comes their way. As professionals, they’re supposed to be ready to fight, but as counterinsurgents, they’re supposed to be tender-hearted and understanding – at least to kids, those village elders they’re fated to drink endless cross-cultural cups of tea with, and their buddies. (Every veteran has a kid story; and mourning lost friends with tattoos, rituals, and drunken sorrow are among the few ways they’re allowed to grieve publicly.) They’re supposed to be anguished when they hear about the “bad apples” who gang-raped, then murdered and set fire to a 15-year-old girl near Mahmoudiya, Iraq,

or the “kill team” that hunted Afghan civilians “for sport.”

Maybe it’s the confusion of these mixed signals that makes us treat our soldiers as if they’re tainted by some special, unwanted knowledge, something that should drive them over the edge with grief and guilt and remorse. Maybe we think our soldiers are supposed to suffer.



The Right to Miss

A couple of decades ago, Dave Grossman, a professor of psychology and former Army Ranger, wrote an eye-opening, bone-chilling book called *On Killing*. It begins with the premise that people have an inherent resistance to killing other people [see box below. –Ed.] and goes on to examine how the military overcomes that inhibition. *On Killing* examines the concerted effort of the military to increase firing rates among frontline riflemen. Reportedly only about 15%-20% of them pulled the trigger during World War II. Grossman suggests that many who did fire “exercised the soldier’s right to miss.” Displeased, the U.S. Army set out to redesign its combat training to make firing your weapon a more reflexive action. The military (and most police forces) switched to realistic, human-shaped silhouettes, which pop up and fall down when hit, and later added video simulators for the most recent generation of soldiers raised on virtual reality.

This kind of Skinnerian conditioning – Grossman calls it “modern battleproofing” – upped the firing rate steadily to 55% in Korea, 90% in Vietnam, and somewhere near 100% in Iraq. Soldiers are trained to shoot first and evaluate later, but as Grossman observes, “Killing comes with a price,

The team was very close-knit and it had a pact. It was this: Bob said we wouldn’t kill, not if we could help it. He said, “We fire short, have them in the legs, or fire over their heads, but not to kill, not unless it’s them or us.”

–Harry Patch, the last veteran of the trenches, in *The Last Fighting Tommy* explaining his Lewis gun team’s agreement on arriving at the front in WWI.



“Panic attack or Anxiety PTSD” – author unknown

Emotional distress is caused less by fear of personal harm than by the dissonance between what soldiers had done or seen and what they had previously held to be right.

and societies must learn that their soldiers will have to spend the rest of their lives living with what they have done.”

That price could be called moral injury.

The term may have come from Jonathan Shay, though he demurs. Whatever its origin, it wasn't until the end of 2009 that it began to resonate in therapeutic communities. That was when Brett Litz, the Associate Director of the National Center for PTSD in Boston, and several colleagues involved in a pilot study for the Marines published “Moral injury and moral repair in war veterans,” a paper aimed at other clinicians. Their stated aim was not to create a new diagnostic category, nor to pathologize moral discomfort, but to encourage discussion and research into the lingering effects on soldiers of their moral transgressions in war.

The authors found that emotional distress was caused less by fear of personal harm than by the dissonance between what soldiers had done or seen and what they had previously held to be right. This echoes Grossman, who concludes that the greatest cause of psychological injury to soldiers is the realization that there are people out there who really want to hurt you.

Moral injury seems to be widespread, but the concept is something of an orphan. If it's an injury, then it needs treatment, which puts it in the realm of medicine, but its overtones of sin and redemption also place it in the realm of the spiritual and so, religion. Chaplains, however, are no better trained to deal with it than clinicians, since their essential job is to patch up soldiers, albeit spiritually, to fight another day.

Yet the idea that many soldiers suffer from a kind of heartsickness is gaining traction. The military began to consider moral injury as a war wound and possible

forerunner of PTSD when Litz presented his research at the Navy's Combat Operational Stress Control conference in 2010. The American Psychiatric Association is also thinking about adding guilt and shame to its diagnostic criteria for PTSD. A small preliminary survey of chaplains, mental health clinicians, and researchers found unanimous support for including

some version of moral injury in the description of the consequences of war, though they weren't all enamored of the term. As if to mark the start of a new era in considering the true costs of war, a new institution, the Soul Repair Center has just been launched at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas, with a \$650,000 grant from the Lilly Foundation to conduct research and education about moral injury in combat veterans.

Of course, to have a moral injury, you have to have a moral code, and to have a moral code, you have to believe, on some level, that the world is a place where justice will ultimately prevail. Faith in a rightly ordered world must be hard for anyone who has been through war; it's particularly elusive for soldiers mired in a war that makes little sense to them, one they've come, actively or passively, to resent and oppose.

When your job requires you to pull sleeping families from their beds at midnight thousands of miles from your home, or to shoot at oncoming cars without knowing who's driving them, or to refuse medical care to decrepit old men, you begin to question what doing your job means. When the reasons keep shifting for what you're supposed to be doing in a country where most of the population wants you to go home even more than you want to, it's hard to maintain any sense of innocence. When someone going about his daily life is regularly mistaken for someone who means to kill you – as has repetitively been the case in our occupations of both Iraq and Afghanistan – everyone becomes the enemy. And when you try – and fail – to do the right thing in a chaotic and threatening situation, which nothing could have trained you for, the enemy can move inside you and stay there for a very long time.

In trying to heal from a moral injury, people struggle to restore a sense of themselves as decent human beings, but the stumbling block for many veterans of recent U.S. wars is that their judgment about the immorality of their actions may well be correct. Obviously, suffering which can be avoided should be, but it's not clear what's gained by robbing soldiers of a moral compass, save a salve to civilian conscience. And despite all the gauzy glory we swath soldiers in when we wave them off to battle, nations need their veterans to remember how horrible war is, if only to remind us not to launch them as heedlessly as the U.S. has done over these last years.

When you've done irreparable harm, feeling bad about your acts – haunted,

sorrowful, distraught, diminished, unhinged by them – is human. Taking responsibility for them, however, is a step toward maturity. Maybe that's the way the Army makes a man of you, after all.

Two final observations from veterans who went to war, then committed themselves to waging peace, apparently a much harder task: Dave Cline began his lifetime of antiwar work as a G.I. in the Vietnam War. A few years into the Iraq War, when he was president of Veterans For Peace, he told me, “Returning soldiers always try to make it not a waste.” The second observation comes from Drew Cameron in a preface to a book of poems by a fellow veteran, published by his Combat Paper Press: “To know war, to understand

When The Emotional Body Armor Comes Off

Prophets are not those who speak of piety and duty from pulpits – there are few people in pulpits worth listening to. The prophets are the battered wrecks of men and women who return from war and find the courage to speak the halting words we do not want to hear, words we must hear and digest in order to know ourselves. These veterans, the ones who dare to tell the truth, have seen and tasted how war plunges us into barbarity, perversion, pain, and an un-checked orgy of death. And it is their testimonies, if we take the time to listen, which alone can save us.

– Chris Hedges, “A Culture of Atrocity,”
Truthdig, June 18, 2007



Jesse Hamilton Iraq Veteran, testifying at Winter Soldier Investigation in Silver Spring, Maryland March 2008.
(Photo by Mike Hastie)

In 1980, and 1994, I found myself in a psychiatric hospital, trying desperately to calm myself down from panic attacks. My belief system had been destroyed by 25 years of constant betrayal attacks. I had become a lost soul in a society that was always trying to get me acclimated back to being obedient. PTSD is a disease of obedience, and I was not willing to put that electronic collar back on. Once you see this truth, the pathway to freedom is unimaginable.

– Mike Hastie
Army medic Vietnam
July 2, 2011

THE WOUNDED WARRIOR

Edward Tick

I met him over a quarter century ago. His face and head were young, handsome, intent, with a sweep of curly hair. His thighs, torso and arms were honed and sleek. His left arm thrust forward and body crouched.

But both his legs were missing below the knees, both arms above the elbows. Above his rippled stomach a great gash cut across his chest, separating his heart and left shoulder from the rest of him, now connected by a rod.

His head too had been knocked off, then restored. Though his eyes, nostrils and mouth flared, his lips were cracked, nose broken, skin torn.

Ravaged and exhausted body. Mind stunned and confused, repositioned but not restored. Heart and body separated. Heart broken.

Yet enduring. Striving to protect to the last breath. Resolute against suffering. A will that propels the body beyond its pain. Strength and devotion that stand their ground until he can stand no more.

This was the spirit I met in a statue called "The Wounded Warrior" in Athens, Greece. It was carved around 300 BCE and originally from Delos, a sacred island reserved for pilgrimage and worship. This statue shows us PTSD set in marble. Any combat survivor looking upon the Wounded Warrior looks upon his own spirit.



THE WOUNDED WARRIOR

For my city and my fathers

I stood my ground

until Ares' stinging sword

claimed my swift, strong legs.

Still I cry out to you

with a man's fierce cry,

my marble battle cry.

Still I rise to face you

grasping my marble battle shield,

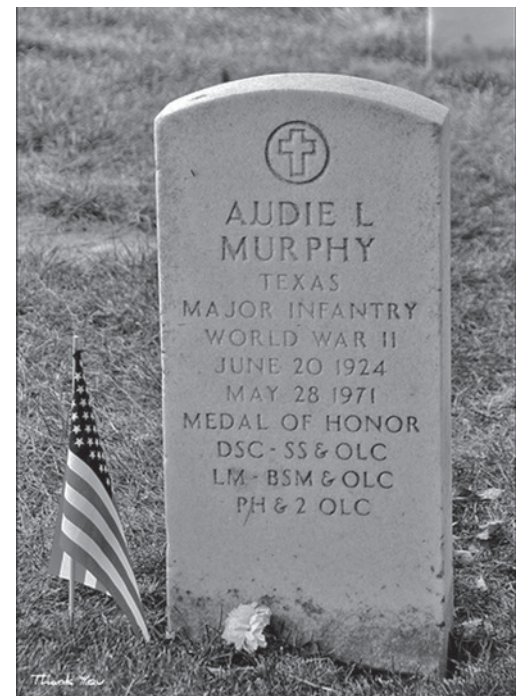
my shield of duty and honor.

conflict, to respond to it is not an individual act, nor one of courage. It is rather a very fair and necessary thing."

Recognizing moral injury isn't a panacea, but it opens up multiple possibilities. It offers veterans a way to understand themselves, not as mad or bad, but as justifiably sad, and it allows the rest of us a way to avoid reducing their wartime experiences to a sickness or a smiley face. Most important, moral repair is linked to moral restitution. In an effort to waste neither their past nor their future, many veterans work to help heal their fellow veterans or the civilians in the countries they once occupied. Others work for peace so the next generations of soldiers won't have to know the heartache of moral injury.

Nan Levinson, a Boston-based journalist, reports on civil liberties, politics, and culture. Her next book, War Is Not a Game, is about the recent G.I. antiwar movement. She is the author of Outspoken: Free Speech Stories, was the U.S. correspondent for Index on Censorship, and teaches journalism and fiction writing at Tufts University. This article first appeared at TomDispatch.com and is reprinted with the author's permission.

See also "'Moral injury' as a wound of war" by John Heuer in the summer 2011 edition of WCT and "Deep Costs of War Trauma: Civilian victims of PTSD suffer without treatment" by Susan Galleymore in the fall 2011 WCT, links to both can be found at WarCrimesTimes.org.



Audie Murphy, Arlington National Cemetery
(Most Decorated Soldier, WWII)
by Tony Fischer Photography

"War is like a giant pack rat, it takes something from you and it leaves something behind in its stead. It burned me out in some ways so that now I feel like an old man [at thirty-one] but still sometimes act like a dumb kid. It made me grow up too fast. You live so much on nervous excitement that when it is over you fall apart."

— Audie Murphy, who suffered from PTSD (then called "Battle Fatigue")

Medea Benjamin

(Continued from page 9)

before Congressional liberals open their eyes to citizen pressure for transparency and accountability concerning drone warfare.

Benjamin is encouraging a vital discussion about strategies and tactics, not defining a single correct demand for the rising anti-drone movement. But there is one option she leaves out, which might be unifying across a broad range of ideologies and parties. The new drone warfare should be subject to an expanded version of the existing 1973 War Powers Act.

Once the issue is open to conversation, no one can make the case for secret Executive Branch warfare with any credibility. This is not like the early Cold War period when the secret government, mainly the CIA, carried out coups, assassinations, and secret wars with impunity. Or, if you like, it actually might be very much like the opening rounds of the Cold War. In either perspective, that Cold War rash of bloody conspiracies eventually crashed because of resistance, awakenings, exposes, scandals, and whistleblowers. We are still living with the toxic debris, in Guatemala, Cuba, and, of course, Iran. In time, however, cumulative public opinion caused the Congress to pass the War Powers Act, imposing, for the first time, limits on the Executive's war-making prerogatives. It was a flawed and compromised War Powers Act, but it gave rise to a new Congressional willingness to exert an oversight, approval, and funding role for the legislative branch of government. Nixon and Kissinger were infuriated at the rebuffing of their imperial presidency.

But now the Obama administration is narrowly interpreting the War Powers Act as applying only to something it calls "sustained fighting," which it defines as the "active exchange of fire with hostile forces," and/or the direct deployment of ground troops. In Libya, the Pentagon claimed the right to "occasional strikes by unmanned Predator UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles] against a specific set of targets." The Pentagon's budget language for Libya even asserted the right to "find, fix, track, target, and destroy regime forces."

None of these presumed rights are protected by the language of the War Powers Act, which apparently never was designed for prolonged counterterrorism strategies, certainly not ones involving drones. If I am wrong, let the White House release the legal briefs in which the constitutionality of their Libya campaign was debated.

The point is that this new age of warfare is altogether lacking new rules, which is where activists, Congress members, national security intellectuals and journalists could be engaged to have an impact.

Benjamin might start the discussion by drafting her own proposal for amending the War Powers Act. Then, time allowing, she can go back to jail.

Tom Hayden is a former state senator and leader of Sixties peace, justice, and environmental movements, and author of 19 books. As founder and Director of the Peace and Justice Resource Center in Culver City, CA, Hayden remains a leading voice for ending the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, and reforming politics through a more participatory democracy.

Rogue States

(Continued from page 1)

“The Security Council recognizes the continued need to take measures to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism and terrorist organizations [and] reiterates Member States obligations in this regard ...”

Also that: “... Member States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat of use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State ...”

Moreover: “The Security Council reiterates the obligation of Member States to refrain from providing any form of support, active or passive, to entities or person involved in or associated with terrorist acts, including by suppressing recruitment of members of terrorist groups ...” (Emphasis mine)

U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice, said that: “the threat of terrorism continued ... in spite of the death of Osama bin Laden” (a U.S. state-sponsored act of terrorism of enormity which had apparently escaped her).

The U.S. “condemned all terrorism” and would, she said, use all its powers: “including the power of our values ... to combat terrorism” – as children collecting firewood, farmers, families, youthful shepherds and goat herders, funeral and wedding parties, die under U.S. drones in numbers in thousands, on orders now directly from the President. Death by computer games from “operatives” thousands of miles away. Some “values.” Quite some terrorism.

Photographer John Cantile, kidnapped by “rebels” on July 19, later escaped and said that some of his captors were “young men with south London accents....Not a Syrian in sight. This wasn’t what I had expected....Two of them were so anglicized they couldn’t speak Arabic.”

Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar, Pakistan’s Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN said that: “No country has suffered as much from terrorism as Pakistan.” An ironic understatement given this U.S. ally is attacked, often daily, by the U.S.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant, for rogue state UK, pledged his country’s support in the fight against terrorism, and thanked Saudi Arabia for its efforts – who, as the U.S. and UK, is allegedly heavily backing terrorists in the sovereign nation of Syria.

Ban Ki-moon was also worried about rising militancy in the Sahel region of Africa: “in part because of the fallout from developments in Libya.” A destruction, massacre, and another lynching of a sovereign leader which he had apparently forgotten the UN, under his stewardship and compliance, had given the green light to despite the UN Charter’s aim to “Save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”

To read the whole document is to enter a world populated with people for whom reality has apparently long vanished.

So much for fighting terrorism and the protection of the sovereign State.

On the 3rd of August, the *Times of India* and others confirmed an open secret: “President Obama has signed a secret order authorizing U.S. support for rebels seeking to depose Syrian President Assad’s government ... Obama’s order, approved earlier this year and known as an intelligence ‘finding,’ permits CIA and other U.S. agencies provide support that could help the rebels oust President Assad.”

On the same day Britain’s Foreign Secretary William Hague (another day, another poodle) announced, using near identical words, increase in support for the Syrian “opposition forces,” including the cash to train “citizen journalists”

to get the word out about (government) atrocities in Syria. Translation: learn convincing lies and propaganda, photoshop and add a few film sets to stage “demonstrations,” “atrocities” – remember the Libya ones, filmed in India, for (just one) example?

The (UK) *Daily Mail* quoted ominously former British Army Commander, Richard Kemp, a former member of the Government’s Joint Intelligence Committee, as saying: “The UK Government cannot give practical support to the rebels without a presence inside Syria, and any Foreign Office officials seeking to liaise with the opposition leaders would require close protection from Special Forces.”

On the 5th of August, Senators John McCain (AZ), Lindsey O. Graham (SC), and Joseph I. Lieberman (CT) advised the U.S. government to directly and openly provide assistance, including weapons, intelligence, and training, to the Syrian insurgents.

On the 7th of August, Secretary of State Hillary (“We came, we saw, he died”) Clinton, hurtling pointlessly round the world like the proverbial headless chicken, threatening, lecturing, ranting, talked of the urgency of planning for a: “post-Assad Syria.”

On the 11th of August, William Hague announced he is committing “an additional” five million pounds to the terrorists. [ii.] Which begs the question: How much was the British government providing already?

Another open secret has also come out: Turkey is training terrorists to go to Syria. [iii.] Turkey (of course a NATO member, but desperate to get into the pretty-well-doomed European Union with its near-certainly-dying currency) appears to be prepared to do anything to curry favor – and in doing so appears to be the first figurative Turkey to vote for Christmas – clamoring to leap in the economic oven and be roasted.

Veteran Russian politician Yevgeny Primakov is under no illusions:

“Mercenaries and volunteers from other states are fighting (Assad) jointly with” violent internal forces. Most Syria opponents are nonviolent. They want peaceful conflict resolution. Washington has other ideas.

“President Obama has given a direct order to the CIA to support the Syrian opposition.”

“That is flagrant interference in internal affairs of a sovereign state, which does not endanger the United States or anyone else.”

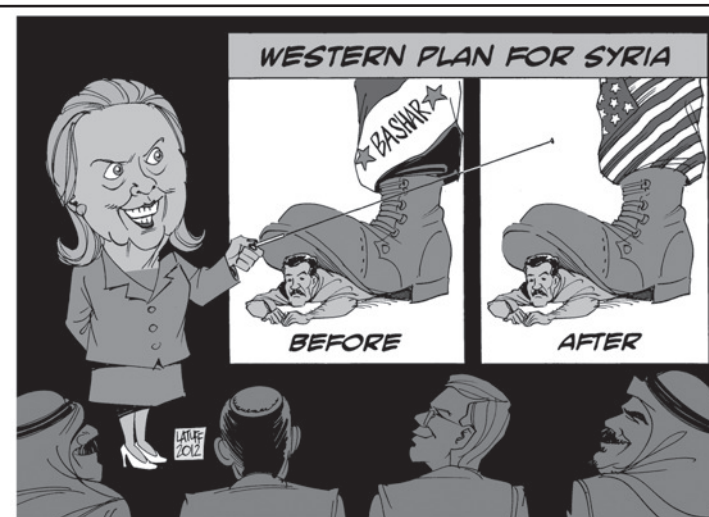
“Saudi Arabia and Qatar are funding militants. Turkey is giving them active support.” So are other regional countries. [iv.]

This would appear to be borne out by photographer John Cantile and his colleague Dutch journalist Jeroen Oerlemans, kidnapped by “rebels” on 19th July and who escaped a week later. Cantile told the BBC he was held in a camp by 30 foreign extremists including some from Britain and Pakistan, stating that some of his captors were “young men with south London accents.”

He asserted that some of the insurgents could not even speak Arabic, with around a dozen of his captors speaking English, out of whom nine spoke with London accents.

“Not a Syrian in sight. This wasn’t what I had expected,” Cantile added. “Two of them were so anglicized they couldn’t speak Arabic.” This was confirmed by Oerlemans who also said there were Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Chechens, and other nationalities.

Britain, seemingly, does not alone fund terrorists, it exports them. The Foreign Office confirmed the kidnapping, but declined to confirm there were British amongst the criminals. Well, they wouldn’t, would they?



“The Security Council recognizes the urgent need for additional efforts to be made at national, regional, and international levels in order to prevent the illicit proliferation (of) materials of all types (which could) fuel terrorist activities,” states the Security Council document. An utterly meaningless thirteen pages, as Security Council Member Countries fund terrorism against a sovereign nation and government.

The Syrian Ambassador to the UN, Bashar Jafari, as the usual suspects railed about his government’s human rights abuses, reminded of Prime Minister Cameron’s reaction to last year’s UK riots: “(Cameron) said that ‘when it is related to national security, don’t talk to me about human rights. We care about the human rights of our people...’ There are third parties in the domestic crisis in Syria,” added Mr. Jafari. Sir Mark Lyall Grant called his remark “utterly grotesque.” (*Daily Telegraph*, June 20, 2012.) Another flight from reality.

In the same article, eminent British-based cardiac surgeon Fawaz Akhras, President Assad’s father-in-law, made a similar point: “When the London riots burst out, Mr. Cameron said he would bring the army out; now would you compare (the riots) to Homs?”

“What would you do? Just watch them killing? There is a responsibility to ensure the security of your people.” In Professor Akhras’s profession, he is used to dealing with people who are incapacitated, of course.

As I write I do so where, because of the Olympics, not a war, we have ground-to-air missiles on domestic buildings; war ships with an array of armaments at all venues; 20,000 soldiers; armed police. Any of the lethal weaponry deployed in arguably Britain’s most populated region, if used, could wipe thousands of us out.

We are residents, not insurgents, we are not in a war zone, but we are potential Olympic cannon fodder; collateral damage. And the U.S.-UK axis and others fund terrorists and blame Syria’s government.

To end where this started, mad, bad, and very dangerous to know.

Oh, and by the way, in 1980 the U.S. boycotted the Moscow Olympics – because the then USSR had invaded and occupied Afghanistan. Think about it.

Felicity Arbuthnot is a London-based freelance journalist. She is one of the few journalists to cover Iraq (which she has visited thirty times since the 1991 Gulf War) extensively, even during the mid-1990s sanctions and was Iraq researcher for John Pilger’s award winning film: Paying the Price—Killing the Children of Iraq.

Notes

i. un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sc10636.doc.htm

ii. bbc.co.uk/news/uk-19205204

iii. bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19124810

iv. rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2012/08/09/full-scale-war-in-syria/

G.I. suicides outpace combat deaths – officers to blame

Soldiers, vets launch campaign to help troops exercise their rights

by Michael Prysner

The U.S. Army revealed that July yielded the highest number of active-duty soldier suicides on record, with 38 in just a single month (this number does not include other branches of service, or Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who commit suicide once they get out of the military).

In the same month, 30 U.S. soldiers were killed in Afghanistan, the highest number in a single month so far this year. (These soldiers should have never been sent to their deaths in the first place.)

Suicides outpacing combat deaths has been a reality for years. In 2008, 2009, and 2010, there were more suicides in the active-duty Army than there were troops killed in Afghanistan.

Those who took their own lives, in reality, did not kill themselves. Their psychological bleeding started when they were sent by lying politicians to occupy a civilian population against their will. Once the bleeding started, they were killed by the willful negligence of the military chain-of-command and the millionaire politicians who

help – only to be told they are fine, and fit to be sent back to their units.

In addition to denying legitimate diagnoses and treatment, the officer corps has created a culture of harassment, intimidation, and shame for those seeking help for PTSD.

Traumatized troops are called “malingerers,” told they are lying, publicly berated and shamed in their units for seeking help, forced to deploy again, and even formally punished for their symptoms.

Even if a soldier manages to get diagnosed and medically discharged with PTSD, the officer-run discharge process can take years, and is so notoriously grueling, unfair, uncaring, and stressful, that it is likely to drive soldiers closer to suicide.

Given the officers’ facilitation of criminally negligent and inadequate treatment, coupled with the encouraged, open culture of shame and intimidation for those seeking help, it is no surprise that so many troops resort to suicide. Yet, every time these shocking statistics come out, the officers scratch their heads and say “We have no idea why this is happening!”

Sometimes they reveal their true feelings. The commander at Fort Bliss, Major General Dana Pittard, said in an official blog post, “I’m personally fed up with soldiers who are choosing to take their own lives so that others can clean up their mess... suicide is an absolutely selfish act... be an adult and deal with your problems like the rest of us.”

Just like when a police department investigates itself for its own acts of misconduct, it’s no surprise the officer corps absolves themselves of all responsibility when their blatant misconduct is in the spotlight.

If a *bullet*-wounded soldier’s commanding officer accused that soldier of lying, made fun of him, and did not allow the medic to treat the wound, that officer would (maybe) be disciplined when that soldier died. But when officers treat PTSD-wounded troops the same way, with hundreds now needlessly lost to suicide, they don’t even get a slap on the wrist.

If a commanding officer were known to deny wounded soldiers emergency care to prevent their bleeding to death, it would be perfectly reasonable and acceptable for the soldiers in his command to refuse their orders into combat. The situation with suicide and PTSD is no different.

The 38 Army suicides in July are the direct result of the actions of the officers who control the lives of the troops. By comparison, the loss of 30 soldiers killed in action in the same month indicates that our own officers are more dangerous than the so-called “enemy.”

There is a way out

The most revealing Pentagon-funded study on military suicides was released in July – the month of record suicides. Soldiers who had attempted suicide and failed were polled about their reasons. The conclusion was: “It’s not that people who attempt suicide want to harm



OUR LIVES OUR RIGHTS

WE DON'T HAVE TO GO TO AFGHANISTAN

themselves... but they want the pain they’re in to stop and they don’t see any other way out.”

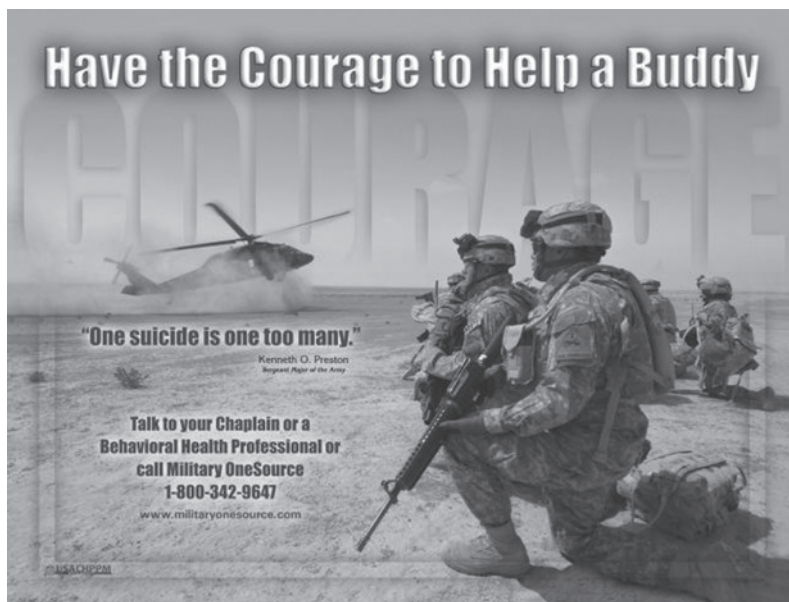
But there is a way out. In late June, March Forward! launched a new campaign called “Our Lives Our Rights.” The campaign is designed to help service members collectively fight back against the reckless orders of the officers and politicians, and specifically, to help them get out of the military and resist orders to Afghanistan – where they’re likely to suffer traumatic stress in the first place. The officers’ corps is powerless in the face of a united movement of active-duty troops and veterans who stand up for their rights.

The way out is to publicly expose the broken system and demand adequate mental health treatment. The way out is to exercise the right to become a conscientious objector, entitled to an honorable discharge with full benefits. The way out is to go AWOL, to denounce the irresponsible military command, and, with a support network, to fight the charges in court.

The suicide crisis will only be solved by the collective action of service members and veterans themselves. No solution will come from our chain-of-command – the solution is fighting our chain-of-command.

Mike Prysner is a former corporal in the U.S. Army and a veteran of the Iraq war.

To learn more about the Our Lives Our Rights campaign, how to get help, or how to get involved, visit www.OurLivesOurRights.org.



Army poster text: “One suicide is too many” indicates their awareness of the problem; but the statistics indicate their failure to deal with it.

refuse to address the suicide crisis. They say there’s “not enough money” for adequate mental health services; at the same time, they write blank checks to multi-billion-dollar defense contractors.

The suicide epidemic and failure of Army mental health care are not new stories. The military brass and the Washington politicians have been well aware, because of intense public pressure, that urgent action is needed to stop the daily – yes, daily – suicide of active-duty troops. But their response has not only been complete inaction, it has been a determined effort to deny treatment for PTSD and to sweep the problem under the rug – while saying, “We support the troops.”

Officers are the real enemy and danger

The worst offenders are the commanding officers. Generals have ordered their subordinate Army psychologists to *not* diagnose soldiers with PTSD in order to keep those soldiers eligible to deploy to combat again, and to deny them compensation and treatment that “wastes taxpayer money.” Soldiers, with documented combat trauma, can walk into a mental health clinic on base and tell the doctor they want to commit suicide – and beg for

SUICIDE IN THE TRENCHES

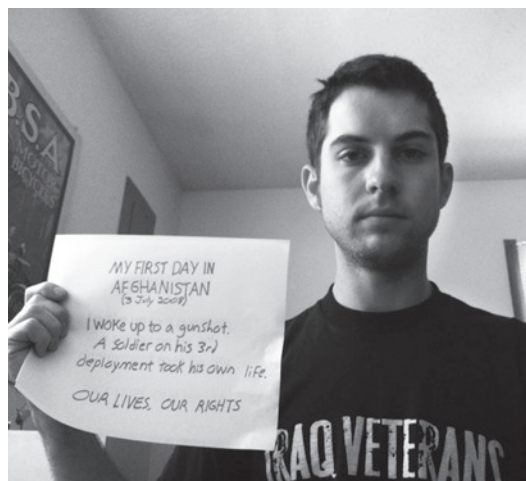
February, 1918

I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.

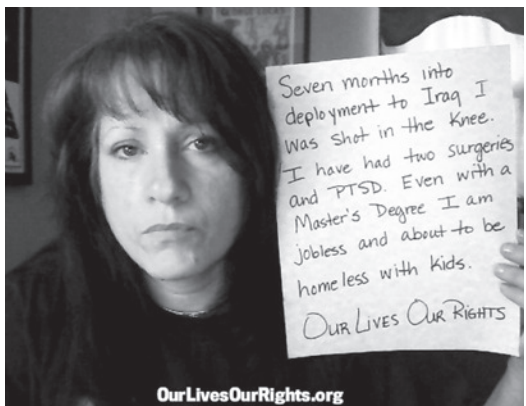
You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.

–Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967),
WWI Western Front veteran



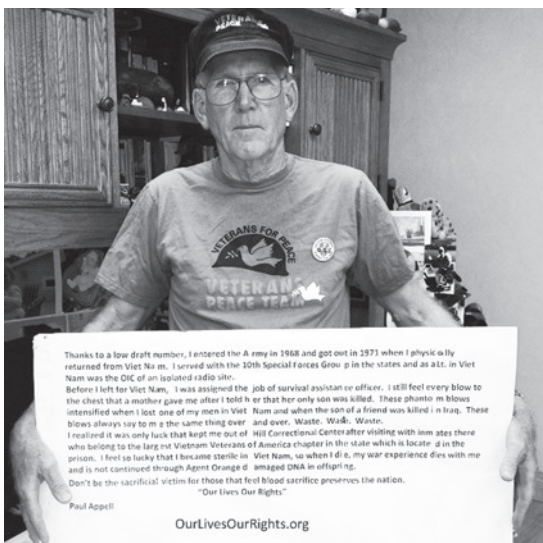
My first day in Afghanistan, 3 July 2008, I woke up to a gunshot. A soldier on his third deployment took his own life.

OUR LIVES OUR RIGHTS



Seven months into deployment in Iraq, I was shot in the knee. I have had two surgeries and PTSD. Even with a Masters Degree, I am jobless and about to be homeless with kids.

OUR LIVES OUR RIGHTS



Thanks to a low draft number, I entered the Army in 1968 and got out in 1971 when I physically returned from Vietnam. I served with the 10th Special Forces Group in the states and as a Lt. in Vietnam as the OIC (officer in charge) of an isolated radio site. Before I left Vietnam, I was assigned the job of survival assistance officer. I still feel every blow to my chest that a mother gave me after I told her that her only son was killed. These phantom blows intensified when I lost one of my men in Vietnam and when the son of a friend was killed in Iraq. These blows always say the same thing to me over and over. Waste. Waste. Waste. I realized it was only luck that kept me out of Hill Correctional Center after visiting with inmates there who belong to the largest Vietnam Veterans of America chapter in the state – which is located in the prison. I feel so lucky that I became sterile in Vietnam, so when I die, my war experience dies with me and is not continued through Agent Orange-damaged DNA in offspring. Don't be the sacrificial victim for those that feel that blood sacrifice preserves the nation.

OUR LIVES OUR RIGHTS

It is not possible to turn on a television set, read a newspaper or go on the internet without hearing about “proxy wars” taking place around the world. A proxy war is a “conflict in which superpowers provide support to either groups or states that rival one another.” Combined with this definition are two other points: 1) that proxy wars were very common during the Cold War between the U.S. and Soviet Union, and 2) that inherent in proxy wars is that none of the superpowers want all-out war, because the specter of nuclear war is omni-present and must be averted at all costs.

The Pentagon wants us to believe that these wars can take place among nations, regions, ethnic or clan constituencies – and that somehow they are not only legitimate, but also are lesser violent conflicts. As a result, they permit the use of, and therefore hide, the extreme violence in suppressing supposed uprisings and protests. They are made out to be an extension of diplomacy and merely occur when diplomacy itself becomes combative.

The compliant media suggest that proxy wars usually occur in conditions of poverty, population pressure, fragile environments, and resource scarcity. This allows warmongers the ability to gloss over the increasing escalation of violence of war as well as the increasing power struggles that develop. It also ignores and enables the cover-up of the military and tactical moves in the short run, and the alliances with semi-illegal violent groups. It ignores the flood of weapons into these war zones, the money that the war criminals make from their manufacture, and the reality that the wars create international violence and manipulative games at the drop of a hat. In addition, they preclude the chance that nations and groupings inside these areas will work out the problems themselves.

In fact, there are no “proxy wars” taking place anywhere in the world today. Neither Russia nor China has the military or economic incentive to engage in the type of wholesale imperialist assaults that are the hallmark of today’s out-of-control Pentagon. What we are really seeing in Syria, Yemen, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc., is the U.S. attacking sovereign nations and

PROXY WARS – They Don’t Exist

by Marti Hiken and Luke Hiken

constituencies and turning them into one-sided attempts by this country to destabilize established governments. The purpose is simply to create regime change everywhere that refuses to fold to U.S. domination and corporate control. Recent disclosures concerning Chevron’s attempted oil grab in Iraq confirm the transparent lies about supposed human rights considerations regarding the Bush assault. Our newest military bases in Africa and Southeast Asia are the most recent footholds in areas that will themselves soon be subjected to our unsought interventions.

What we are really seeing in Syria, Yemen, Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc., is the U.S. attacking sovereign nations.... The purpose is simply to create regime change everywhere that refuses to fold to U.S. domination and corporate control.

Billionaire corporations, gangster banksters, and rapacious oil companies forage throughout the world to seize the wealth of other peoples and nations, all with the blessing and military support of the Pentagon.

In spite of the daily deluge from the media, there is no competing force in Syria, for example, that relies upon Russia, China, or any other superpower to defeat the “rebel” forces that are financed, armed, and supported militarily by the U.S. The supposed civil war in Syria is nothing short of a fabricated armed and violent “civil uprising” fostered and reinforced by our Pentagon to overthrow Bashar Assad’s government. Similarly, throughout the world, it is the U.S. manipulating and controlling NATO or some other U.S. military or intelligence front group, and waging our own war against a weaker country that is receiving little, if any, military assistance from any other nation. It is solely the U.S. that creates these uprisings, insurrections, and wars to fight our battles for us. In other words, we hire mercenaries, disenfranchised locals from other countries, or “concocted rebels” to do our dirty work internationally.

By misrepresenting these war zones as “proxy wars,” the Pentagon pretends that our illegal drive to overthrow governments on our “Don’t Like List” is somehow a two-sided struggle between superpowers. It is a carefully planned and manipulated charade.

Superpowers fighting through proxy armies? Nonsense! The U.S. Congress just passed a \$606 billion dollar military budget while at the same time it told the American people to live a more “austere” existence. Billionaire corporations, gangster banksters, and rapacious oil companies forage throughout the world to seize the wealth of other peoples and nations, all with the blessing and military support of the Pentagon, which is about as accountable to the American people as the Koch brothers.

Not only are we confronted with the recent congressional hearings relating to CIA gun-running under the auspices of “Fast and Furious,” but in recent weeks, news of our latest imperial adventures in Africa has come to light under a new rubric. Instead of using the T-word, “terrorism,” the U.S. is now “training friendly forces” to fight a “war on drugs.” These words will, of course, be much more palatable internationally and locally (especially to the American population) and excuse the inevitable violence and death that we are exporting to that region. Yet, such American policies as “Fast and Furious” are in full gear in Mexico, throughout Central and South America, in Africa, and if not already, soon will be in Asia. It is all about dominion over a region’s resources and wealth.

The people of the world understand that American troops, as the saying goes, are coming to a theater near you.

Marti Hiken is the director of Progressive Avenues, the former Associate Director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, and former chair of the National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force. Luke Hiken is an attorney who has engaged in the practice of criminal, military, immigration, and appellate law. This article first appeared on the Progressive Avenues website (www.progressiveavenues.org).

War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today.

– John F. Kennedy

War crimes on a peaceful island

Need to test some new weapons? Bomb paradise!

Story and photos by Helen Jaccard



Bombs, missiles, rockets, seaborne assaults. Food and water contaminated with heavy metals. An epidemic of cancer and birth defects. A cloak of secrecy. A modern war zone? No, it's Sardinia, victim of a military and political system that values power and money over the health of people and the environment.

The second largest island in the Mediterranean, Sardinia is a natural paradise with diverse plants and wildlife, many species found only there. Twelve hundred miles of coastline, beautiful beaches and resorts draw more than 10 million tourists each year. In the rural areas, people farm, raise sheep, and make magnificent wine, honey, and cheese.

unified Italy as an autonomous region, an association not always beneficial. Since World War II, Sardinia has become a strategic location not only for Italy but for NATO as well. Eighty percent of Italian military bases are located there (shared with NATO) and a third of the island is restricted to military use: arms manufacturers test new bullets, bombs, rockets, and missiles; old munitions are destroyed by detonating, burning, or burial; and Italian, NATO, and non-NATO militaries use the island for training and joint exercises during which about 7,200 square miles of surrounding land, sea, and air are closed to navigation and fishing and nearby villages are evacuated.

Over the past 50 years, poisonous, radioactive, and highly carcinogenic substances such as jet fuel, napalm, white phosphorus, asbestos, cadmium, lead, tungsten, antimony, thorium, and cerium have contaminated both military zones and surrounding areas. Cancer and other diseases are epidemic, deformed animals are common, and unexploded ordnance turns up in unexpected places. Most Sardinians – angry, afraid, and frustrated – want to know the cause of these problems and what to do about them but secrecy in the name of military, industrial, and national security makes investigation difficult. A shepherd analyzed the situation with shocking realism: “I have leukemia, I have only a few months or years of life...Nobody cares

are held. The toxic toll is heavy. Some areas no longer support vegetation; wells and aquifers are contaminated. John Madeddu worked at the Capo Frasca base from 1968 to 1987 and has diffuse large cell lymphoma. He remembers a clearing where large numbers of bullets collected; when it rained, the area turned into a marsh and the water seeped into the ground. Artesian wells in that area provide water for both the base and nearby farms. Thorium, a radioactive highly carcinogenic heavy metal has been found in local honey, milk, cheese, and other areas of the food chain.

The health effects are alarming [see box on next page]. The high rate of cancers and birth defects have come to be known as the “Quirra Syndrome.” Militaries and weapons manufacturers pay the Italian government €50,000 per hour, up to a €1 million per day, to use the area for testing but the money stays in Rome and health problems in Sardinia remain unaddressed.

Decimomannu Air Base

Decimomannu in Southwest Sardinia is the largest NATO air base in the world. (Bombing sorties against Libya were launched from Decimomannu.) Since 1954, Italy, Germany, Canada, the U.S., and other NATO countries have been contaminating the environment with jet fuel and other poisons. Jet fuel contains xylene, benzene, and lead – highly carcinogenic substances. In February 2011, the town of Decimomannu prohibited the use of local wells but the Italian government and military deny responsibility and the spills continue.

La Maddalena / Santo Stefano islands

La Maddalena is an archipelago located 2 kilometers northeast of Sardinia. From 1972 to 2008 a U.S. / NATO base on Santo Stefano Island served as home port for nuclear submarines. In 2003 the nuclear powered submarine USS *Hartford* struck a rock and damaged its rudders, sonar, and electronics. Residents suspect greater damage because algae in the archipelago were found to have high concentrations of radioactive alpha particles and traces of plutonium. Since the base was never decontaminated, the source is either from residual pollutants or the release of radioactive elements from the USS *Hartford* accident.

Political Action

The people of Sardinia are demanding to know what chemicals and metals have been used. They want health care and financial assistance for those affected, all military bases closed, and decontamination of the land, aquifers, and sea. A rally is held on the 15th of each month in Cagliari, the capital, organized by victims of cancer, their families, and those opposed to military use of Sardinia.

There are 15 mountaintop radar stations on the island and additional sites are planned. Many islanders, fearing the danger of electromagnetic radiation, want the existing sites closed and no new ones built. In response to local officials and the political party, Partito Democratico, speaking out, plans for four new ones have been abandoned.



These sheep are grazing right across the street from the Teulada NATO base. The base is a live fire testing and training facility whose contamination causes cancer, birth defects, and deformed animals. They have really big udders, so you can tell they are used for milking – some of the sheep milk on Sardinia is contaminated with heavy metals, including manmade thorium with cerium, Thorium is radioactive and highly toxic.

But Sardinia's location off the coast of Italy, close to Spain, France, and North Africa, made it an important trading post in the Mediterranean for centuries – and that attracted imperial navies. Interspersed with periods of independence, it was dominated by Etruscans, Carthaginians, Phoenicians, and Romans; was part of the Byzantine Empire; and was ruled by a succession of Italian duchies, Spain, and Austria. In 1861, Sardinia joined newly-

about us, and we just do not count for anything. They are powerful; it is better for them if there are fewer of us.”

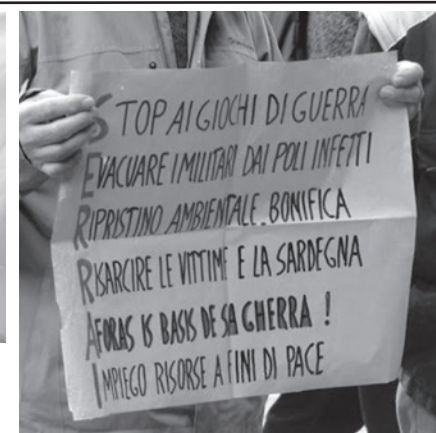
Quirra, Teulada, and Capo Frasca testing and firing ranges

The worst of the pollution, cancer, and birth defects occur in the vast firing ranges of southeast Sardinia where artillery, rockets, laser-guided missiles, and bombs are test fired; old weapons and chemicals are disposed of; and joint air and naval exercises



Above: This facility sits on the Quirra missile test firing range and is likely used for controlling the tests and tracking the missiles that are fired. Below: This sign, on the road to the Quirra base, reads: “Salto di Quirra Military Base; Military Zone - Access Prohibited; Area used for Military Exercises; Any offenders will be punished in accordance with the law.” Similar signs are posted all over the island because there are military zones, not just bases, all over Sardinia.





Sard activism: Demonstration at Capo San Marco against a construction of a radar facility; signs displayed at Piazza del Carmine – a public square in Cagliari where cancer victims and their families gather to demonstrate – call for closing the bases, voting against nuclear power, stopping the war games, restoring the environment, compensating victims, and using resources for peace. Four planned radar sites will not be built because of public pressure.

Sardinia's Toxic Toll Cancer and birth defects

- Fourteen children with severe malformations were born between 1988 and 2002 near the Quirra base in Escalaplano (pop. 2400).
- A village of 150 people with no leukemia cases from 1990 to 2000 had 12 leukemia deaths in 2002, 63 in the past decade.
- Among workers on seven of twelve farms near the Quirra base, the cancer rate is 65%.
- Industrial heavy metals were found in the tissues of Francesco Piras who died of pancreatic cancer in 2007. He was 27 and served for 10 months at Capo Teulada.
- Of 18 Quirra-area shepherds who died of cancer from 1995 to 2000, 15 had elevated levels of man-made radioactive thorium 232 and cerium.
- Deformed livestock, such as two-headed lambs and a pig with one huge eye, are common near military bases; depleted uranium was found in the tissues of a malformed lamb.

Since the 1990s fishermen have been pushed out of the sea by NATO's naval exercises. Some have demonstrated at the port, the base entrances, and at sea. As many as 42 boats have sailed into the heart of the war games, thrown out nets, and brought everything to a halt. Their demands are simple: a right to the sea, clean water, and a safe environment. In 2005, the government began paying them to stay out of the water and many have abandoned their profession.

In March 2012, a letter calling for the closure of Capo Frasca and Capo Teulada bases and changing the Quirra base back to a technical-scientific research center was signed by over 100 Senators from many different parties in Italy.

Sardinians are well informed about the deformities and high rates of cancer; the newspaper *L'Unione Sardo* has been particularly good about publishing articles about the effects of contamination from military use of Sardinia.

Helen Jaccard, BS Chemical Engineering, has a particular interest in environmental issues. A member of Veterans For Peace in Seattle, Washington, since 2006, she has focused on the environmental cost of war and militarism. Since her visit to Sardinia in 2011, she has been lecturing on war and the environment with Sardinia as a case study. Her article with a link to her research paper can be found at Warisacrime.org/sardinia.

The Battle for Jeju Island

How the Arms Race is Threatening a Korean Paradise
by Robert Redford

Imagine dropping fifty-seven cement caissons, each one the size of a four-story house, on miles of beach and soft coral reefs. It would destroy the marine ecosystem. Our imperfect knowledge already tells us that at least nine endangered species would be wiped out, and no one knows or perhaps can know the chain reaction.

That's what is about to happen on the pristine coastline of Jeju Island, a culturally and ecologically unique land off the southern coast of the Korean peninsula. It seems to be motivated by the United States' urge to encircle China with its Aegis anti-ballistic system – something China has called a dangerous provocation – and by the South Korean navy's construction of a massive naval base for aircraft carriers, submarines, and destroyers to carry Aegis.

If you're wondering why this isn't better known, it's certainly not the fault of Jeju villagers. Those tangerine farmers and fishing families have been camping out on the endangered coast for five years, putting their lives on the line to protect it. They include the legendary women sea divers of Jeju who harvest abalone on lungpower alone, knowing that oxygen tanks could cause them to over-harvest.

But Jeju's distance from the mainland has combined with military secrecy and misleading official reports to preserve the global ignorance locals have come to refer to as "the Jeju bubble." As a result, hundreds of acres of fertile farmland have already been bulldozed to prepare for concrete, and caissons would extend this dead zone into the sea.

I learned about this last summer when I read an Op Ed in the *New York Times* called, "The Arms Race Intrudes on Paradise" by Gloria Steinem. As she wrote:

There are some actions on which those of us alive today will be judged in centuries to come. The only question will be: What did we know and when did we know it?

I think one judge-worthy action may be what you and I do about the militarization of Jeju Island in service of the arms race.

Jeju isn't just any island. It has just been selected as one of the "Seven Wonders of Nature" for its breathtaking beauty, unique traditions, and sacred groves. Of the world's 66 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Geoparks, nine are on Jeju Island. It is also culturally unique with a tradition of balance between people and nature, women and men, that causes it to be called Women's Island. It

is also known as Peace Island.

The proposed

base is near a UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserve, which is also a nationally designed environmental protection area. Indo-Pacific bottle-nosed dolphins spawn there because of the rich biodiversity of the coast. The South Korean navy claims endangered species could be relocated and the coral beds reconstituted; something both scientists and villagers reject as absurd. The massive cement structures would not only crush all marine life, but block out sunlight critical to other ocean-based species, and the frequency signals from submarines would bring painful deaths to whales. It has also been a fact of life surrounding military bases that human cancer rates, violence, and sexual violence have increased.

I am moved and impressed that the residents near the coastline have been waging a fierce nonviolent struggle to stop the base. They've used their bodies to block bulldozers and cement trucks, sacrificed their personal freedom, been beaten and imprisoned, and paid heavy fines for "obstructing" the business of the navy and such construction companies as Samsung and Daelim – all to protect their homeland and an irreplaceable treasure on this planet Earth. Though 94 percent of the villagers voted against the base, the South Korean government is proceeding with construction. It is also bound by treaty to let the U.S. military use all its bases.

I think the least that environmentalists, peace activists, and supporters of democracy can do is express our outrage. You can take action now by visiting the Save Jeju Island Campaign website. As individuals, tourists, professionals, and citizens, you may have added access to pressure points that only you know.

Secrecy and hypocrisy have let this military base get under way. Facts and activism can stop it before it's too late.

For more information and to get involved go to: SaveJejuIsland.org

Robert Redford is an actor, director, environmental activist, and long-time trustee of the Natural Resources Defense Council. This article was first posted at OnEarth.com and is reprinted under Creative Commons Public License.



Activist Sung-Hee Choi puts her body in front of a bulldozer. Credit: SaveJejuIsland.org



Gillchun Koh graffiti art, Gangjeong, South Korea

"Touch not one stone, not one flower" is a protest slogan of Jeju Island – known as the "Island of World Peace" – which is under severe threat from the development of a military base, although 94% of the islanders voted against it. Read Robert Redford's article on page 19.

The immorality of the United States and Great Britain's decision to invade Iraq in 2003, premised on the lie that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, has destabilized and polarized the world to a greater extent than any other conflict in history...those responsible for this suffering and loss of life [in Iraq] should be treading the same path as some of their African and Asian peers who have been made to answer for their actions in The Hague.

– Archbishop Desmond Tutu,
in a September 1, 2012 *Observer* op-ed,
calling for Tony Blair and George W. Bush
to face prosecution
at the International Criminal Court

I wonder how the foreign policies of the United States would look if we wiped out the national boundaries of the world, at least in our minds, and thought of all children everywhere as our own.

— Howard Zinn (1922-2010)



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Airstrikes on Weddings, 2010, screenprint and painting, 72" x 48", Juan Fuentes and Art Hazelwood, created for the American Friends Service Committee's touring exhibition *Windows and Mirrors*.

Poster text: *December 29, 2001, B-52 attack kills 92-107 civilians at wedding • July 1, 2002, Helicopter fires rockets, killing 48 at a wedding • December 29, 2002 Air raid kills more than 100 civilians at a wedding • May 19, 2004 More than 40 people die in air attack after a wedding • July 6, 2008, Wedding party hit by an airstrike, killing 47 • November 4, 2008, Warplanes bomb Afghan wedding part killing up to 40.*

The artists wrote: This mural is based on a poster created during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) to protest the aerial bombardment by the Fascists of civilian populations. The original poster showed a dead child and said, "MADRID The 'Military' Practice of the Rebels." The sky in the poster was similarly filled with a web of bombers. In our mural we contrasted the bombers (in this case drones) with a traditional Afghan wedding celebration. The text at the bottom details six documented airstrikes on wedding parties in the course of the war, total civilian deaths are at least 367 [as of 2010] at wedding parties alone. It goes without saying that an aerial attack on wedding parties represents only a tiny fraction of all civilian deaths in Afghanistan.

