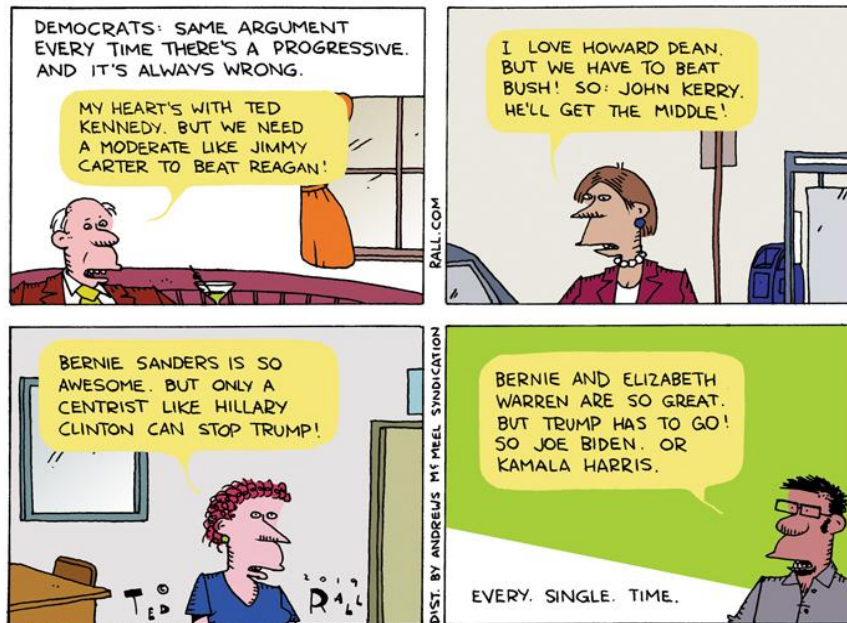


Military Resistance 17L2



ACTION REPORTS

They Don't Have To Go Through It

[Outreach To New York National Guard]

From: Alan S]
Military Resistance Newsletter
Subject: Outreach to New York National Guard 12.10.2019.
Date: Dec 11, 2019 & 12.24.19

The last couple of outreaches (unreported) haven't been very productive – little distributed and once, not a single soldier patrolling.

Another reason for non-reporting to you is most National Guard soldiers are refusing handouts of information saying they're not permitted to accept anything other than Military Initiative intro cards that show our contact info and have been an important part of outreach for years.

Refusals by troops has often been the case but now is more frequent. Why is anyone's guess.

Nevertheless, that doesn't account for all refusals as some soldiers, not many, are eager for new material and there are always troops who have never having seen anyone from Military Initiative, like the two last night.

With the recent Washington Post expose of disastrous U.S. war policies in Afghanistan, including critical comments from veterans, it was time to outreach again to soldiers at NYC commuter terminals about who was sending them to destruction via blind incompetence and pseudo-patriotism.

Copies of the expose were handed out.

One private, never having met any of us, was curious about the material offered and took copies of Military Resistance Newsletters 17K1 and 17J2, an "On Watch" (National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force) issue explaining recent changes/updates in military law, a DVD of both "Sir! No Sir!" and "Authority and Expectations" plus a copy of "Soldiers in Revolt." His patrol partner accepted the same material but instead of "Sir No Sir!" (the last copy just given out) took "The Burn Pits," another book handed out by Military Initiative over the years.

I provided information about Military Initiatives and our intense distrust and dislike of politicians who continually sacrifice our military to their Imperial whims. The first soldier said: "Sure. They don't have to go through it."

Please remember although there might not be a military uniform within miles of our daily lives there are clerks/workers at post offices, banks, stores, etc. who might have friends or relatives in military service who could very well be interested in the outreach material provided. Remember, once you strike up a relationship with any civilian with such connections you might be able to repeat the effort in future distribution.

[For further about: "**Authority & Expectations**," "**Sir! No Sir!**" & "**Soldiers in Revolt**," see:]

[Authority & Expectations: An Iraq Veteran condemns the war and the government:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyfkLubnyBw>

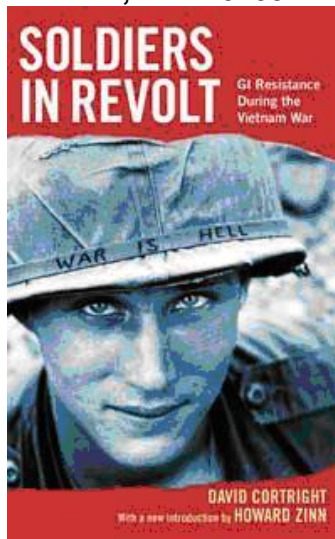
[Sir No Sir: about Military Resistance Vietnam Days
http://www.simosir.com/the_film/storefront.htm

[Soldiers In Revolt: A Vietnam veteran describes the strategy and tactics used by U.S.troops to stop an imperial war.

Free to active duty. Civilians: \$16 including postage.
Buy one for a friend/relative in the service.

Requests from active duty or orders from civilians to:
Military Initiative:

P.O Box 2604,
N.Y., N.Y. 10108



MORE:

ACTION REPORTS WANTED: FROM YOU!

An effective way to encourage others to support members of the armed forces organizing to resist the Imperial war is to report what you do.

If you've carried out organized contact with troops on active duty, at base gates, airports, or anywhere else, send a report in to Military Resistance for the Action Reports section.

Same for contact with National Guard and/or Reserve components.

They don't have to be long. Just clear, and direct action reports about what work was done and how.

If there were favorable responses, say so.

If there were unfavorable responses or problems, don't leave them out. Reporting what went wrong and/or got screwed up is especially important, so that others may learn from you what to expect, and how to avoid similar problems if possible.

If you are not planning or engaging in outreach to the troops, you have nothing to report.

NOTE WELL:

Do not make public any information that could compromise the work.

Identifying information – locations, personnel – will be omitted from the reports.

Whether you are serving in the armed forces or not, do not identify members of the armed forces organizing to stop the wars.

If accidentally included, that information will not be published.

The sole exception: occasions when a member of the armed services explicitly directs identifying information be published in reporting on the action.

MORE:

Military Initiative

Organizing Committee Mission Statement:

July 4, 1776

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

1. Members of the armed forces have the right and duty to defend civilians from dictatorships and to aid civilian movements against dictatorships.

This applies whether dictatorship is imposed by force of arms or is imposed when those in command of the resources of society use their wealth for buying politicians to control the government.

The armed forces are not for use by politicians or corporations to attack movements fighting for improvement in the lives of working class citizens, or to attack the rights and liberties of Americans written in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution

2. The armed forces are not for use in wars of Empire.

Military Initiative is for immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Members of the armed forces organizing to defeat wars of empire will receive encouragement and support.

The long term objective is to assist in eliminating wars of empire by eliminating all empires.

Nations attacked by Empires have the right to independence and to resist invasion.

3. Efforts to increase democratic rights in every society, organization, movement, and within the armed forces itself will be encouraged and supported.

This applies to the armed forces of every nation. There is no national government at this time organized by, for, and under the control of its citizens.

4. Military Initiative does not advocate individual disobedience to orders or desertion from the armed forces because members of the armed forces working together is most effective.

That said, Military Initiative will assist in the defense of troops who see individual desertion or refusal of orders as the only course of action open to them for reasons of conscience.

5. Military Initiative practices organizational democracy.

This means control of the organization by the membership, through elected delegates to any coordinating bodies that may be formed, whether at local, regional, or national levels. Anyone elected is subject to recall, by majority vote of the membership.

Any coordinating bodies will report their decisions and votes to the membership, and may be overruled by a majority of the membership.

6. It is unnecessary for Military Initiative to be in complete political agreement with other organizations to work together toward a common objective.

Organizations working together on common objectives need to discuss differences about the best way forward.

7. The mission of Military Initiative is to bring together in one organization members of the armed forces and civilians who are dedicated to these objectives.

In order to be prepared to defend and extend human rights and economic justice, we will meet together to organize wherever we may be, engaging in such activities as may be necessary, reasonable and effective.

Membership Requirements:

8. Civilian member participate in organized action to reach out to and work with active duty armed forces.

9. Military Initiative or individual members may choose to support candidates for elective office who are for immediate withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq, but do not support candidates opposed to immediate, unconditional withdrawal.

10. Members may not be active duty or drilling reserve commissioned officers, or employed in any capacity by any police or intelligence agency, local, state, or national.

11. I understand and am in agreement with this mission.

I oppose bigotry against people because of their race, religion, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation.

I pledge to defend my brothers and sisters, and the democratic rights of the citizens of the United States, against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

----- (Signed)

(Date)

----- (Application taken by)

Military Initiative:
P.O Box 2604,
N.Y., N.Y. 10108

MORE

**You Can Take Action That Makes
A Difference:
Join The Military Initiative:
MILITARY INITIATIVE MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION**

Name (please print): _____

Armed Forces? (Branch) _____

Veteran? Years: _____

Union: _____

Occupation: _____

Mailing address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone (Landline): _____

Phone (Cell): _____

\$ dues paid _____

(See next: Calendar year basis.)

Armed Forces Members	@	Dues waived
Civilians	@	\$25
Students/Unemployed	@	\$10
Civilian/Military Prisoners	@	Dues Waived

Comments:

NOTE: Civilian applicants will be interviewed, in person if possible, or by phone.

**Military Initiative:
P.O Box 2604,
N.Y., N.Y. 10108**

MORE

“People Need Not Be Helpless Before The Power Of Illegitimate Authority”

[Based on a statement by David Cortright, Vietnam Veteran and armed forces resistance organizer.]

In the final analysis the stationing of American forces abroad serves not the national interest but the class interest of the corporate and political elite.

The maintenance of a massive, interventionist-oriented military establishment is based on the need to protect multinational investment and preserve regimes friendly to American capital.

Imperialism is at the heart of the national-security system and is the force fundamentally responsible for the counterrevolutionary, repressive aims of U.S. policy.

Only if we confront this reality and challenge it throughout society and within the ranks can we restore democratic control of the military.

Of course nothing can be accomplished without citizen involvement and active political struggle.

During the Vietnam era enlisted servicemen created massive pressures for change, despite severe repression, and significantly altered the course of the war and subsequent military policy.

To sustain and strengthen this challenge we must continue to build political opposition to interventionism and support those within the armed services, including national guard and reserves, who defy the goals and program of Empire.

The central lesson of the GI movement is that people need not be helpless before the power of illegitimate authority, that by getting together and acting upon their convictions people can change society and, in effect, make their own history.

Military Initiative

Military Initiative
P.O Box 2604,
N.Y., N.Y. 10108

Military Resistance In PDF Format?

If you prefer PDF to Word format, email: contact@militaryproject.org

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Afghanistan War: “The American People Have Constantly Been Lied To”

DECEMBER 10, 2019 by JACOB HORNBERGER, CounterPunch. [Excerpts] This article first appeared on the Future of Freedom website.

The Pentagon cannot be pleased with the Washington Post.

That's because the Post has just disclosed a mountain of previously secret documentary evidence within the military showing that the Pentagon has been intentionally lying for years about the "progress" that it was making with its forever war in Afghanistan.



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: "No kidding."]

While the Pentagon has been publicly assuring the American people that its war has been going swimmingly well, the truth is that it's been the exact opposite.

The documents consist of brutally candid interviews with military insiders, who believed that their statements would forever remain secret.

After three years of refusing to comply with the Freedom of Information Act, the Pentagon finally decided to comply with an order of a U.S. district judge to turn over the documents to the Post.

While the Pentagon is still refusing to divulge the identities of most of the people who were interviewed, one of the interviewees, Douglas Lute, a three-star army general who served in Afghanistan, is quoted as saying:

"We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan — we didn't know what we were doing. What are we doing here? We didn't have the foggiest notion of what we were undertaking."

Another interviewee, Col. Bob Crowley, stated,

"Every data point was altered to present the best picture possible. Surveys, for instance, were totally unreliable but reinforced that everything we were doing was right and we became a self-licking ice cream cone."

According to the Post,

John Sopko, the head of the federal agency that conducted the interviews, acknowledged to The Post that the documents show “the American people have constantly been lied to.”

The interviews are the byproduct of a project led by Sopko’s agency, the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. Known as SIGAR, the agency was created by Congress in 2008 to investigate waste and fraud in the war zone.

More than 2,300 American soldiers killed for nothing. Thousands more injured, mentally, spiritually, or physically.

Tens of thousands of Afghans killed, maimed, incarcerated, or tortured. The entire country destroyed.

And for what? For nothing!

Most of the troops know the truth, just as most Americans know it.

According to the Pew Research Center, “Nearly 18 years since the start of the war in Afghanistan and 16 years since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, majorities of U.S. military veterans say those wars were not worth fighting, according to a new Pew Research Center survey of veterans.

A parallel survey of American adults finds that the public shares those sentiments.”

How could it be otherwise?

MORE

Afghan War Report Enrages Veterans And Gold Star Families: 'Even As More Of Us Died, They Lied'

“Billions Of Dollars Of Waste With Our Loved Ones Blood For The Gaining Of What? Nobody Knows”

“From A Former Marine Infantryman Who Served In Afghanistan: ‘They Lied.

For Years, They Lied. Even As More And More Of Us Died. They Lied. And Lied. And Lied.'"



Tombstones illuminated by a cloudy sky at Arlington National Cemetery on May 26, 2019 in Arlington, Virginia. At Arlington, Section 60 is for U.S. service members killed in America's most recent wars, especially Iraq and Afghanistan. Tom Brenner/Getty

[Thanks to Alan Stolzer, Military Initiative Organizing Committee, who sent this in.]

12/9/2019 by James LaPorta, Newsweek [Excerpts]

When the Defense Department's top-secret history of the Vietnam War, known as the Pentagon Papers, was leaked in 1971 and revealed how the government had long misled the public about the progress the United States had made during the Vietnam war, combat veterans like 22-year-old Marine Guy Mazzeo, were enraged at then-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara.

On Monday, Mazzeo, now 70, said he understood the anger from veterans of the Afghanistan war over a damning report in The Washington Post which details how presidents, politicians and Pentagon officials misled and, in some instances, lied to the U.S. public about the war effort in America's longest-running war.

The documents created by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, were obtained by the Post under the Freedom of Information Act, and only after the Post sued SIGAR on two separate occasions in federal court to compel the release the documents.

Contacted by Newsweek, no reply was returned from American Resolute Support officials in Afghanistan.

The more than 400 interviews spread out over more than 2,000 pages of previously unpublished interviews of generals and career diplomats to aid workers and Afghan officials show how the United States has been unable to deliver on their foreign policies in the region despite a 18-years of conflict that has cost billions of dollars and left tens of thousands of both American and Afghan families permanently shattered.

One of the individuals who saw the Post's reporting on Monday was Jose Leal, the father of Army Corporal Joseph Maciel of South Gate, California. Maciel was just months away from his 21st birthday when he was killed by an Afghan ally during an insider threat attack at the Tarin Kowt Airfield in southeast Uruzgan province in July 2018.

"The deaths of our loved ones...they don't care because it's not the family of a Washington bureaucrat," Leal told Newsweek.

"They see death as normal because they never had to serve this blessed country. Billions of dollars of waste with our loved ones blood for the gaining of what? Nobody knows."

Andrea Lasher, the widow of Marine Lance Corporal Jeremy S. Lasher, who was killed ten years ago in the southern Helmand Province of Afghanistan said, "I might not fully understand or have endless knowledge of what goes on with the government but I know and understand genuine character. I know what it means to carry oneself with honor and have morals. Jeremy will forever carry this with his name, and these government officials that did not stand up for what was morally right, well, they live with that."

She added: "The truth—even if it is ugly—and even if we do not want to look it in the eye; it will always be revealed. It is a hard pill to swallow and can be heartbreaking, but we must swallow it."

Across social media, U.S. military veterans of the war were outraged over what the Post had found and upon publication, a barrage of swift condemnations ensued directed at military commanders of past and present and the administrations of Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump.

A text sent to a Newsweek reporter from a former Marine infantryman who served in Afghanistan (and requested anonymity) said: "They lied. For years, they lied. Even as more and more of us died. They lied. And lied. And lied."

"([I once felt like) we were doing what the Global War on Terrorism was meant to do, take the fight to the Taliban who were protecting al-Qaeda,' said the U.S. Navy Corpsman, granted anonymity by Newsweek due to Pentagon media regulations. "This makes it feel like (the Marines) and the others died for nothing—that we couldn't even give them that bit of dignity."

The Corpsman added: "I later went back to Afghanistan and we just bulldozed over forward operating bases like they were never even there."

A senior National Security Council official quoted by the Post said there was pressure from the White House and Pentagon to produce war figures that paint the troop surge under Obama as a sound strategy that was working, despite evidence to the contrary.

"It was impossible to create good metrics. We tried using troop numbers trained, violence levels, control of territory and none of it painted an accurate picture," reported the Post, quoting the senior NSC official speaking to government interviewers in 2016.

"The metrics were always manipulated for the duration of the war."

Former U.S. Marine Sergeant Matthew Moores, a medically retired tank commander and Afghanistan veteran, told Newsweek in the same article that he blames the architects of the war, not the troops. "They were professionals who died doing their jobs... What does pi** me off, though, is that those people died trusting that there was a plan better than 'I don't know, muddle around for a few years,' but there wasn't."

Gregory Butera, a former U.S. Marine infantry sergeant who deployed to Afghanistan in both 2009 and 2011, told Newsweek on Monday, "It's almost like they could have asked any lance corporal about the progress made in Afghanistan and got the same answers in the Post's article."

In the early summer of 2009, Butera, a former member of Second Battalion, Eighth Marines, fought in Operation Khanjar, or "Strike of the Sword," the largest U.S. military offensive since the Battle of Fallujah in 2004 and the largest helicopter offensive that the Marine Corps had launched since the Vietnam War. Butera's unit would lose 14 Marines by the end of their deployment.

"I can't help but think about the party our unit had at the officer's club after we got back. The officers and senior enlisted were all up there talking about what a victory we won and showing a slideshow of pictures," said Butera. "Everyone was drinking and laughing like it was V-E Day."

"I was pissed and made some remark about not understanding why everyone was so pleased with themselves because everything we did ended up having no real impact," Butera told Newsweek. "Nothing real accomplished."

James LaPorta served as a U.S. Marine infantryman and deployed in 2009 with Gregory Butera. On July 23, 2019, Lance Corporal Jeremy S. Lasher, in the same deployment, was killed, leaving behind his wife, Andrea, and their infant son, who is now 12-years-old.

[James LaPorta is a senior correspondent for Newsweek covering national security and the U.S. military. You can follow him on Twitter at @JimLaPorta]

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Mogadishu Hotel Raided By Insurgents

December 11th, 2019 Long War Journal

Yesterday, Shabaab launched an assault on a popular hotel in Mogadishu which left at least five people dead.

According to local reporting, a team of five Shabaab gunmen dressed in Somali military uniforms, stormed the SYL Hotel yesterday night. Somali security forces then responded, prompting a nearly eight hour battle for control over the hotel.

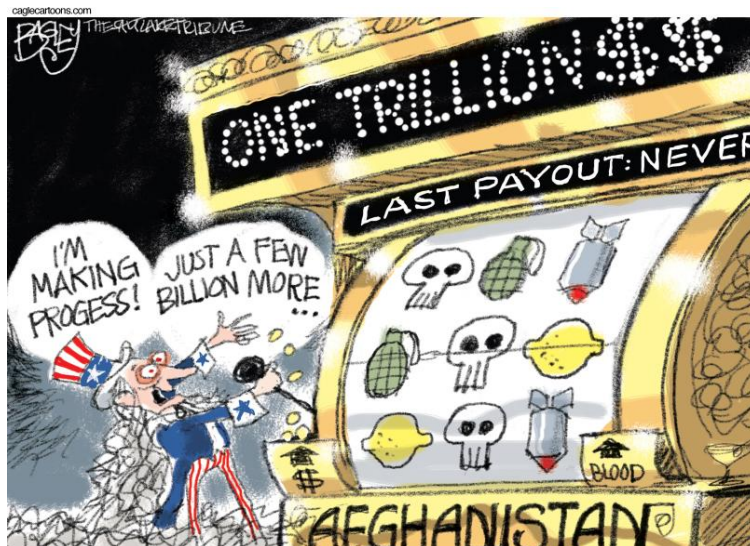
At least five people, including two members of the security forces and three civilians, were killed in the attack. Somali officials reported that all five gunmen were also killed.

Shabaab quickly claimed credit for the assault. In a statement released online, the jihadist group alleged that “the eight hour long siege resulted in more than 25 apostate fatalities among them senior officials, military and police officers, presidential guards, government employees, and secret intelligence agents.”

It goes on to claim that “more than half (of the fatalities) were inflicted upon the Turkish-trained apostate militia.” The SYL Hotel, which sits near the presidential palace, is a popular hotel among Somali officials. It is also commonly targeted by Shabaab. In Feb. 2016, the hotel was hit by an assault utilizing a bombing.

Almost a year earlier, Shabaab claimed credit for a bombing at the hotel that killed three people. The attack took place as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and a delegation were at the hotel.

MILITARY NEWS



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: “Cashing in.”]

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**The oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them.
-- Karl Marx quoted by V. Lenin in State And Revolution; 1917**

ANNIVERSARIES

**December 1971:
Honorable Anniversary:
Vietnam Veterans Against The War
Liberate The Statue Of Liberty**



Carl Bunin Peace History December 24-30

Two dozen members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War “liberated” the Statue of Liberty with a sit-in to protest resumed U.S. aerial bombings in Vietnam.

They flew an inverted U.S. flag from the crown as a signal of distress.

MORE

**December 28, 1971
“Members Of The Vietnam Veterans
Against The War Leaving The Statue
Of Liberty, Which They Had Occupied
For Two Days”**

[This comes from the weblog maintained by James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace: imagineaworldof.blogspot.com] [From the history of the Statue Of Liberty, by the National Park Service, www.cr.nps.gov]

Tim MacCormick of New Jersey and fourteen other members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, on the afternoon of December 26, 1971, arrived on Liberty Island by the Circle Line boat along with other tourists.

But, when the last return ship to Manhattan sailed that evening, the veterans were not aboard. Instead, just before closing time, they hid among the exhibit partitions, building materials, and storage closets which were lying about the monument's base while work was being finished on the American Museum of Immigration.

When NPS personnel made their 7:30 evening check-up of the statue, they found that the veterans had seized control of the landmark and barricaded the three ground floor entrances.



(Source: Photograph Collection of the American Museum of Immigration, Liberty Island, U.S. Department of the Interior, NPS)

The men inside refused to speak to or admit any Park Service people, but on the door they posted a typewritten statement addressed to President Richard M. Nixon:

“Each Vietnam veteran who has barricaded himself within this international symbol of liberty has for many years rationalized his attitude to war. . . .We can no longer tolerate the war in Southeast Asia. . . .Mr. Nixon, you set the date (for leaving Vietnam), we’ll evacuate.”

On December 27, twenty-one National Park police flew to Liberty Island from Washington where they were joined by New York City police and Coast Guardsmen. These security forces stood by while the government attempted to reach a peaceful compromise with the occupiers. They were told that they would be permitted to picket and protest on the island if they would simply vacate the statue, allowing it to reopen to visitors.

The veterans rejected the offer, flew the United States flag upside down from the statue’s crown, and waited.

Law enforcement officers also waited. During that day thousands of disappointed tourists were told at the Battery that they could not go out to the statue. Congresswoman Bella Abzug (Democrat-New York) sent a telephone message of support to the demonstrators.

Meanwhile, United States Attorney Whitney North Seymour, Jr., went before District Court Judge Lawrence Pierce to request an injunction directing the veterans to open the doors, leave the statue except during regular visiting hours, and permit Park Service personnel and tourists to enter.

On the morning of December 28 Judge Pierce issued a temporary restraining order, instructing the protestors to leave the statue “forthwith.”

Two hours later, after conferring with their lawyers, the veterans removed the barricades from the entrances and emerged with “clenched fists raised.”

They had cleaned up their debris and caused no significant damage to the property. The monument was reopened to the public, with the first ferry-load of visitors arriving at 2:15 that afternoon.

Tim MacCormick issued a statement to the press explaining why they had picked this particular target:

“The reason we chose the Statue of Liberty is that since we were children, the statue has been analogous in our minds with freedom and an America we love.

“Then we went to fight a war in the name of freedom. We saw that freedom is a selective expression allowed only to those who are white and maintain the status quo.

“Until this symbol again takes on the meaning it was intended to have, we must continue our demonstrations. . . . “

MORE:

A Vietnam Veteran Who Occupied The Statue Of Liberty Remembers; An Iraq Veteran Against The War Understands

December 24, 2006 By Tim Blangger of The Morning Call

Nestled in a corner of a tiny Carbon County hollow, between an unnamed hill and an unnamed stream, Paul Fichter's home sits in quiet, exurban isolation. His lawn, a collection of lush ferns scattered among mature pine trees, is calming, meditative.

But climb the steps of Fichter's simple wooden porch and the mood changes. Next to the door, a three-foot-long Air Force missile pierces the weather-worn trailer's side at combat-ready angle, its fin end exposed.

Granted, Fichter's eccentric outdoor inventory includes a miniature Arc de Triomphe model encased in a backyard terrarium, twin Buddha-like statues, an Allentown fire hydrant and one of the city's discarded Call Box emergency telephones, the last two bought at auction.

But the missile ...

The ordnance helps Fichter disguise damage a falling tree did to his trailer several years ago. The outside of the trailer looks fine, but inside, the damage is more apparent. The roof still leaks.

For those who know Fichter, the missile also recalls the Vietnam War and the effect it had on him. He was one of 15 veterans who occupied the Statue of Liberty for three nights and two days over the Christmas holiday 35 years ago, starting on Christmas Eve.

Fichter looks good for a 61-year-old. He's stopped drinking but still smokes. He ties his long, silver-gray hair in a ponytail. When he thinks, he sometimes strokes his substantial gray beard. The war, that war, for good or bad, plays a big part in who he is.

A star football player at Emmaus High School — he was starting offensive end on the 1962 team that shared a league championship with football powerhouse Northampton that year — he was drafted after he failed to register for classes at Moravian College, which he attended for a year.

After a year in the Army, he decided to volunteer for duty in Vietnam, in part, he says, because he liked the anti-authoritarian air the veterans returning from the war displayed. He wasn't very political or even all that upset about being drafted, he remembers

But the year Fichter spent in Vietnam turned out to be a traumatic experience. When he talks about it today, his voice changes, takes on a once-removed quality. “You just didn’t know who the enemy was,” he says, haltingly.

Friends of Fichter’s from Emmaus also served in Vietnam. But Bill Trotter, his football teammate, thinks the experience especially affected Fichter.

“He was always a very intelligent, very introspective guy. I think he had much more of a difficult time adjusting,” says Trotter, now a partner in the Hotel Bethlehem. “He thought about a lot of things and I saw that intensified when he came back. He thought a lot about his experiences and it had a deep impact on him.”

The decision to become part of the anti-war movement was a slow process for Fichter.

When he came home, he decided not to marry or have children. “I was in no condition to marry anyone. I knew of the problems, of what happened when guys tried,” he says.

“I came to realize that, basically, I came home to a parade, which is to say Emmaus in 1968 was an environment that was still in favor of the war. I received slaps on the back and handshakes and ‘Nice job; well done, lad’ for what had been the most morally abominable thing I had ever done or ever hoped to do.”

One night in the spring of 1971 — he remembers it was a Monday, for some reason — Fichter caught bits of a national news report from Washington, D.C., where an anti-war group, the Vietnam Veterans Against The War, was camping on The Ellipse and returning war medals.

The vets sardonically called their non-violent “assault on Congress,” as Fichter puts it, Dewey Canyon III, a reference to Dewey Canyon II, the military code name given to a secret operation in Laos, Vietnam’s neighbor, which began earlier that same year.

Fichter was moved by what he saw in the coverage of that event, especially images of Vietnam Vets and Gold Star mothers, women who lost sons in the war, being turned away from the iron gates of the Arlington National Cemetery, where they had wanted to hold a demonstration.

“I came to a rapid conclusion,” he recalls. “If I was going to be involved in any capacity beyond an individual effort, this would be the organization.”

The next day, he arranged for a leave of absence from his construction job and drove to Washington to join the Dewey Canyon vets.

That trip began his involvement with the group, which included attending dozens of gatherings, conventions and protests.

Almost by chance, he came to be among the veterans who occupied the Statue of Liberty.

He first learned of the planned action at a peace encampment at Valley Forge, outside of Philadelphia.

“I was quietly approached and told that if I wanted to take part, I should be at a certain time and place the next day,” Fichter recalls. Once they were there, the group still wasn’t told of its final destination, although Fichter says at least a few of the veterans knew the details.

He believes the secrecy had much to do with a widely held belief among the vets that the government had spies inside the anti-war movement.

“There was a general expectation that we were going to spend some significant time in prison for our actions,” Fichter says. The vets feared the Nixon administration would bring down the full weight of the federal government on them, he says.

The Statue of Liberty occupation coincided with other veteran actions around the country, including a protest in which several veterans chained themselves to the fence near the Betsy Ross house in Philadelphia.

Fichter’s group stopped at a home in northern New Jersey — Fichter isn’t sure exactly where — and the group made sandwiches, which they stuffed into the pockets of their jungle fatigues. Then they drove to Manhattan and boarded the last ferry of the day to Bedloe’s Island.

The 15 men ascended the Statue of Liberty then hid in the arm, which was undergoing repairs, and waited until the staff of the National Park Service left the island.

“We wanted to stay in the statue until the war ended, but we knew that was fairly optimistic,” he says. One of the vets, armed with a roll of dimes, went to the pay phone in the statue’s lobby and began calling media outlets. Within hours, the occupation was national news.

The event itself was actually uneventful. The vets didn’t want to damage the statue, just draw attention to their opposition to the war.

The vets ate sandwiches and drank instant coffee, which they found in the canteen area of the statue.

They held a news conference and discussed the occupation with officials from the National Park Service.

Bill Garvin, one of Fichter’s best buddies, took an American flag from the lobby and climbed out onto the statue, hanging the flag upside down — an international symbol of distress. The image made many newspapers the following day.

“We tried to keep a focus,” Fichter says. “We weren’t against the American people or the people who worked for the National Park Service. We showed that we were some human beings who were trying to end the war.”

The vets negotiated with park officials and, after three days, they left as a group, returning on a ferry to Manhattan. They had taken up a collection among themselves

and left the money for the coffee they drank. They also left a note apologizing for any inconvenience they might have caused park workers.

No charges were filed.

In the end, says Fichter, there was no “mindless cheering and shouting.” A few other vets met the occupiers as they returned and there was a press conference at a local restaurant. Mostly, the protestors were hungry.

“We hadn’t won. The question was, did we do anything? We had tried. That was our perspective,” says Fichter.

Fichter continued to work with Vietnam Veterans Against the War but eventually came to realize he had to stop.

“I began to burn out,” he says. “I continued with local actions, but the torch was being passed. I was no longer able to function that well. I had encountered too much.”

A few weeks after the occupation, Fichter says, the Allentown office of the FBI called, leaving a message with his mother, Muriel, an English teacher at Emmaus High School. They wanted to interview Fichter — “interview being an interesting euphemism,” he says.

They didn’t ask about the statue occupation, Fichter says, but wanted to know about his involvement in the veterans’ peace group.

The interview “contributed to the hastening of my psychological decline,” Fichter says.

Vietnam began his descent, but it wasn’t until 40 years after his return that he took steps to arrest it.

Three years ago, at the start of direct U.S. involvement in Iraq, Fichter sought help from the Veterans Administration for the first time.

Fichter says the Iraqi war may have contributed to his mounting emotional problems. He can’t say for sure. Doctors told him to stop following the news because doing so might upset him.

He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome and began taking medication. He makes a point of praising his VA doctors and the help he’s received.

He is now semi-retired from his landscaping and handyman jobs, collecting disability benefits.

Fichter’s delayed reaction to his post-traumatic stress syndrome doesn’t surprise veteran Michael Hoffman, also from Emmaus, who experienced a similar, if not quite so delayed, reaction from his Iraqi tour of duty.

“At first I was happy to be back, but slowly, I started having problems,” says Hoffman, 26, who now lives outside of Philadelphia. “I started drinking continually and started having nightmares. I realized something was wrong. I was

never for the war, but I had the usual soldier's mentality. I had orders. I followed the orders, and then I got to go home."

Reluctantly at first, Hoffman started speaking out against the war, then the 1997 Emmaus High School grad became one of the founding members of Iraqi Veterans Against The War.

Veterans from both Vietnam and the Iraq conflict have made strong connections, Hoffman says. "So many of the Vietnam Vets devoted their lives after Vietnam to making sure it didn't happen again. Now, they're watching my generation fight a war they swore they would never allow. It is literally killing them inside. I'm seeing Vietnam Vets who were clean and sober for years go back to drinking. Iraq is making them relive Vietnam."

Less than four years into the Iraq war, Iraqi veterans are speaking out against it, says Frank Corcoran, a Vietnam veteran who volunteers for Veterans for Peace, a Philadelphia-based group opposed to the Iraq war.

The Iraqi Veterans Against the War held national planning sessions last January in Philadelphia. A series of informational meetings, to get their word out, followed, says Corcoran.

"Most of our members are out of the service and actively speaking out," says Corcoran. "We're a lot of ex-Marines, ex-medics, folks who were deep into" the war.

That Iraqi vets are voicing their opposition to the war doesn't surprise Ted Morgan, a political science professor at Lehigh University, who teaches courses on the Vietnam war.

Opposition to the war among Vietnam vets was a "historically unprecedented movement in the military. It took an enormous breaking through of people's consciousness. Before Vietnam, there was a very strong consensus in the country that the United States could do no wrong overseas." Vietnam Veterans were part of changing public opinion, Morgan says.

"Vets in the (Vietnam) war, whether they were in the VVAW or not, were not viewed as anti-war people but as really important voices in the movement. They had super credibility for what they were saying because they had been there, engaged in combat and had seen it first hand."

In a storage room in his trailer, Fichter keeps a box of booklets and flyers from his days in Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and he has been thinking about looking through it for the first time since he ended his involvement.

"Those were some good times," he says. "I'd like to work on the differences between the VVAW in big cities and smaller towns. A lot of the vets from the bigger cities were socialists. Guys like me from the smaller towns, we worked at Bethlehem Steel. We didn't want to end capitalism. We wanted to end the war."

Fichter is also slowly working his way back. He's happy in his home — "Hovel, Sweet Hovel," a sign near his door reads — calmly talking about this being where he wants to

settle for the rest of his life. A small stream runs behind the property and a series of landscaping lights flicker off the water at night.

He watches the stream from a window, sitting in a barber's chair in his living room, between two bookcases. One holds books about Vietnam and a few war mementoes, including a helmet Fichter wore when he served as a military policeman. The other bookcase has a Civil War theme. "I guess I was looking for something, a war that had some meaning," Fichter says of his interest in the 19th-century war between the states.

A third bookcase, the largest of the three, holds hundreds of dusty folk recordings, mostly on long-playing, 331/3 records. The large television near the chair is dark and silent. Folk music from a satellite radio station floats in the background.

At last, Paul Fichter may have found his peace.

***Dishonorable Moments In U.S.
Military History:
December 29, 1890:
Massacre At Wounded Knee;
"Many Women And Children Standing By
Their Tipis Under A White Flag Of Truce
Were Cut Down By Deadly Shrapnel
From The Hotchkiss Guns"***



A mounted soldier rides among the dead Indians at Wounded Knee

[Via Peace History December 25-31 By Carl Bunin]

English.uiuc.edu

From Momaday, "The American West and the Burden of Belief" in Geoffrey C. Ward, *The West: An Illustrated History*. Copyright © 1996 by The West Book Project, Inc. (Little Brown, 1996).

On December 15, 1890, the great Hunkpapa leader Sitting Bull, who had opposed Custer at the Little Bighorn and who had toured for a time with Buffalo Bill and the Wild West show, was killed on the Standing Rock reservation.

In a dream he had foreseen his death at the hands of his own people.

Just two weeks later, on the morning of December 29, 1890, on Wounded Knee Creek near the Pine Ridge agency, the Seventh Cavalry of the U.S. Army opened fire on an encampment of Big Foot's band of Miniconjou Sioux.

When the shooting ended, Big Foot and most of his people were dead or dying.



Indian Bodies on the ground at Wounded Knee

It has been estimated that nearly 300 of the original 350 men, women, and children in the camp were slain. Twenty-five soldiers were killed and thirty-nine wounded,

Sitting Bull is reported to have said, "I am the last Indian."

In some sense he was right. During his lifetime the world of the Plains Indians had changed forever.

The old roving life of the buffalo hunters was over. A terrible disintegration and demoralization had set in. If the death of Sitting Bull marked the end of an age, Wounded Knee marked the end of a culture.

“I did not know then how much was ended.

“When I look back now from the high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young.

“And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people’s dream died there. It was a beautiful dream....” -Black Elk-

Paula M. Robertson: From Encyclopedia of North American Indians. Frederick E. Hoxie, Ed. Copyright © 1996 by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Many women and children standing by their tipis under a white flag of truce were cut down by deadly shrapnel from the Hotchkiss guns.

The rest fled under withering fire from all sides.

Pursuing soldiers shot most of them down in flight, some with babes on their backs.

One survivor recalled that she was wounded but was so scared she did not feel it. She lost her husband, her little girl, and a baby boy.

One shot passed through the baby’s body before it broke her elbow, causing her to drop his body. Two more shots ripped through the muscles of her back before she fell.

The warrior Iron Hail, shot four times himself but still able to move, saw the soldiers shooting women and children.

One young woman, crying out for her mother, had been wounded close to her throat, and the bullet had taken some of her braid into the wound.

A gaping hole six inches across opened the belly of a man near him, shot through by an unexploded shell from the guns.

Others told of women, heavy with child, shot down by the soldiers. Bodies of women and children were found scattered for three miles from the camp.

On New Year’s Day, a pit was dug on the hill that the Hotchkiss guns had been on, and the frozen bodies of 146 men, women, and children were thrown into the pit like cordwood until it was full.

The whites stripped many of the bodies, keeping as souvenirs the Ghost Shirts and other clothing and equipment the people had owned in life, or selling them later in the thriving trade over Ghost Dance relics that ensued.

One member of the burial party remarked that it was “a thing to melt the heart of a man, if it was of stone, to see those little children, with their bodies shot to pieces, thrown naked into the pit.”

Besides the 146 buried that day, others who had been wounded died soon afterward, and relatives removed many of the bodies before the government burial party arrived. Estimates of the number of Lakotas slain vary, but many authorities believe that the figure is around three hundred men, women, and children.

Not many escaped.



The mass grave at Wounded Knee

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CLASS WAR REPORTS

Sudan:

“Hundreds Of Thousands Turned Out To Mark A Year Since The Beginning Of The Revolution”



Khartoum. MENA Solidarity Network

December 20, 2019 MENA Solidarity Network

Hundreds of thousands turned out to mark a year since the beginning of the revolution in Sudan, with mass protests in Khartoum, Port Sudan, El Obeid, Atbara and many other cities on 19 December.

Meanwhile government ministries, such as the Ministry of Higher Education commemorated the martyrs by hanging out huge banners and posters.

**“We Were Never This United,
And Now We Must Succeed!”
The Self-Organized Strike Of
Serbia’s Postal Workers;**

“The Strike’s Importance Lies In The Effective Self-Organizing Of The Postal Workers”

“The Action Was Launched And Conducted Without The Involvement Of Representative Trade Unions”



Photo: Marko M. Dragoslavić / Association of Serbia Post Workers / Goran Klještan BOSKE – Facebook.

December 18, 2019 by Marko Miletic Tibor Meszmann and Andras Juhasz, Left East [Excerpts] This article was translated from the Serbian by Tibor Meszmann.

Serbia’s postal workers recently conducted a collective action that stands out as an example of mutual care, worker pride, decency, solidarity, and struggle for one’s profession – a struggle that lasted for almost ten months and has recently ended with an agreement.

The value of the strike lies not only in its very humble but persistent assertiveness and sense of community.

It stands out even more if we know under what kind of conditions it came about.

Under current conditions, Serbia Post holds a near monopoly in some segments of the product market and is opening up new ‘competitive’ services (after all, it was ‘the’ Serbian company of 2018!).

It doesn’t merely exploit its workers, however, but bleeds them dry. It is ruining not only the livelihoods of committed and diligent people, it is devaluing, perhaps even destroying a profession.

Maybe this is 'just' in harmony with the criminal capitalization of yet another public company for the benefit of a select few?

Criminal power structures within the new 'elite' only aim at accumulation, while systematically devaluing the meaning of work – not only for postal workers but for many other workers as well, e.g. pharmacists, retailers, and others all over Serbia. As a result, the workers of the Public Enterprise Serbia Post share the destiny of many people in the country. They work in bad working conditions, for low wages, but are still trying to fight for their profession and a decent living.

The company, with branches in towns all over the country, employs around 15,000 workers, including 12,000 working in its so-called technology segment. These are technicians, drivers, clerks, that is, all of those working in what we call the core of the postal service.

It is precisely these workers who have the lowest wages, in a company that is competing in the market with other companies and is realizing profits. Many of these workers receive a salary closer to the official monthly minimum wage of €255 and work without a standard employment contract (mostly on a fixed-term basis). Approximately 12,000 workers receive salaries that are under the national average of €425/month. It is precisely this wage level the workers wanted to achieve with their strike.

There was another element behind the postal workers wage demands: their increased workloads and work-related costs.

Due to understaffing and the persistent or even increasing demands on the job, the workload has intensified in recent years. The number of workers responsible for postal traffic was cut, while at the same time new highly remunerated managerial positions were created, mostly linked to clientelist appointments made by the governing political parties.

Overburdened by work and not able to make ends meet, Serbia's postal workers self-organized to strike in March 2019, without the backing of the trade unions.

The collective action included a number of shutdowns that disrupted Serbia Post's functioning. After nine days of work stoppages and pressure exercised by the government, this initial strike ended with an agreement reached between the postal workers and Serbia's government. The agreement guaranteed partial improvements to the workers' financial condition but fell short of their original demands.

In the following months *Serbia Post's* management raised the prices of the company's services while refusing to improve the material condition of its workers. So with no real achievements, the workers struck again.

Still lacking support from their representative trade unions, postal workers self-organized once more, launching another nation-wide strike on 3 December 2019. Work stoppages were most pronounced in northern Serbia, including Belgrade, but also spread all over the country.

After another ten days on strike, and under constant pressure from the management and the government, a new agreement was reached on December 13. According to the

agreement, *Serbia Post* will introduce a 13.1% increase for the lowest salaries, a further 3.8% increase as a result of repealing legal provisions restricting salaries, as well as an increase in the guaranteed holiday bonus (the so-called 'regres') by roughly €8.5.

Not all workers are satisfied with the outcome of their struggle for better material conditions. That comes as no surprise, since Serbia's economic circumstances would continue to pose a challenge to workers even if they had won their original demand for the official average wage of €425/month.

Still, the strike organized by *Serbia Post*'s workers represents a landmark in recent Serbian labour history.

The strike's importance lies in the effective self-organizing of the postal workers. The collective action was launched and conducted without the involvement of representative trade unions.

As such, it stands as a warning to trade unions and their representatives as to which side they take.

“Our Customers Are Great, They Are Mostly Supporting Us”

Management targeted workers without a permanent contract with a classic instrument – threatening not to renew their contracts and other threats. The most notorious tactic employed by management was the temporary suspension of hundreds of striking workers, a tactic that the workers outsmarted (by refusing to sign their suspension papers).

The strike, as in many authoritarian systems, was placed under constant pressure by the executive power: police patrols were sent out to striking post offices.

At the same time public support for the postal workers grew, becoming both louder and clearer, which caused those in power and the management of the company to increase their use of repression against the strikers. Workers, nevertheless persisted convinced that they are struggling for the right thing – for a wage that is able to secure more than bare survival.

“The lack of money is the primary and most basic problem. So many people are dissatisfied because our wages have not been changed in 17 years, and, since 2014 they put their hands even deeper into our pockets with a 10% decrease.

Now in January they returned 5%, which, for me as a postal carrier, means 1300 dinars (€11) – what am I supposed to do with that?”

Female customer service workers at *Serbia Post* also lack supplies (resources) and equipment to do their work. “We are buying pencils, staplers, and staples. Sometimes there is no paper, so they tell us to buy paper. We don't have tape for the packing stations,” a female worker told us who wanted to remain anonymous.

As a result, costumers are often dissatisfied with *Serbia Post's* services. However, the workers they are meeting are the one's providing a supply of basic materials from their own pockets.

Our female correspondent told us that relations with customers improved during the work stoppage: "Our customers are great, they are mostly supporting us. We have more problems when we are working than now, people are really great."

Many Serbia Post workers are thus in an unenviable situation. Their decision to start a strike is legitimate, and the outcome depends on collective power and solidarity.

"We were never better organized. There is no way back, we were never so united and now we have to succeed," concludes the female worker at *Serbia Post*.

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