

GI SPECIAL 5B18:

**“It Is Time Veterans
Share The Mike With No
One.
It’s Time”**

**America’s Bumper Sticker
Freedom on the March**



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: February 16, 2007
Subject: America's Bumper Sticker

America's Bumper Sticker

**This photo was taped on the back of a car
in a parking lot in Tacoma, Washington.
It's one of those pictures that says it all.**

**It is about murder, it is about killing everything.
It is about what the U.S. government is doing
in Iraq.**

**It is about what we did in Vietnam, Cambodia,
and Laos, and so many other countries.
It never stops.**

**The most dangerous voices in America are
the voices of American veterans who are
bearing witness to the atrocities of Uncle Shame.**

**We are the most powerful voice in an anti-war rally.
We are the most powerful voice in America.
We know what the U.S. military does behind closed doors.
We have the power to make a huge auditorium absolutely silent.**

**It is time for veterans in this country who know the bloody truth,
to step forward and make this country have a panic attack.
It is time for America to grow up.
The days of wine and roses are over.
Only we can open the door to hell,
and make naive America scream.
It's time they shared the horrible pain.**

**It is time they looked at the enemy,
The United States Government.
Home of the brave, land of consumption over dead bodies.**

**It is time veterans share the mike with no one.
It's time.**

**Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
February 16, 2007**

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: (hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

MORE:

“We Really Thought We Should Be At The Front Of The March”

**“We Need To Be Out Front, And
Let The American Public Know,
And Let Our Brothers And Sisters
In The Military Today Know Today
That There Are Veterans That Are
Against This War”**



Kelly Dougherty, Iraq Veterans Against the War executive director. [Photo: wsws.org]

What Kelly Dougherty Said That Got Cut From The Report Published Below

[This is what Kelly Dougherty really said at the beginning of her speech after the rally:]

“Before I start, to the men and women of IVAW who turned out today, and who are here tonight even though we may not have been put at the front of the march, we made our own front of the march.

“We’re going to continue doing that because we need to be out front, and let the American public know, and let our brothers and sisters in the military today know today that there are veterans that are against this war, and we’re there to support them.”

[From the Youtube of her speech, at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-H9SU5ZjhY>.]

[She returns to this theme at the end of the remarks as published below when she says “I was really pleased with the IVAW, the people from the Appeal for Redress and all the military and the family members -- although we really thought we should be at the front of the march.” T]

**“Where We Can Have The Most
Impact As Far As Organizing To
End This War Immediately And
Bring Our Brothers And Sisters
Home Is By Targeting The
Military Itself”**

**“The People We Can Reach The Best
Are The Veterans And Troops--To
Encourage Them To Resist”**

“We’re the veterans and troops, so the people we can reach the best are the veterans and troops--to encourage them to resist, to encourage them to educate

themselves, and to pass that knowledge on to other people, and really challenge the military's ability to continue conducting this war."

"We were told by one [Congressional] aide, "Don't you know that if we cut off funding, your friends in the military aren't going to get paid?"

You can't pull the wool over eyes.

I'm sorry, but we were getting paid in the military before the war started, and maybe we weren't making as much as a Halliburton contractor, but there was a paycheck. So if Congress cut off the money for this war, there's enough to bring the troops home, quickly and safely and now."

February 16, 2007 Socialist Worker [Thanks to Katherine GY, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

AFTER THE huge antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C., on January 27, several hundred people packed into the back room of Busboys and Poets bookstore for a spirited, standing-room-only forum featuring author Anthony Arnove and Kelly Dougherty of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Kelly served in Iraq immediately after the U.S. invasion as a member of the Colorado Army National Guard. After her return, she co-founded Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). She is now IVAW's executive director.

I'LL TELL a little about my story in the military and in Iraq.

I've told it a lot, so I feel like I shouldn't keep telling it, but I'm sure there are probably a lot of people who haven't heard stories from me or other veterans who served in the military since September 11.

I think it's good to get an idea of who the men and women of the military are -- to hear their stories.

I think for a lot of people, the way that the military are portrayed in the media is that we're just faceless, patriotic drones who go along and do whatever we're ordered to do.

I know a reporter asked the president, "What do you think of this troop surge, a lot of these people who you're calling into this 21,000 have already been once or twice or three times?"

And he said, "Well, I talked to a young man who's going back for his third time, and he said his family was behind him, and he had to carry out the mission."

I think that's such a simplistic and untrue way to gloss over the situation. The fact is that the men and women in the military are real human beings. They have

families, they have children, a lot of us are going to school and have careers, and we're not just blindly patriotic.

I think most of the people in Iraq right now in the U.S. military are there fighting for the people to their left and their right. They're fighting for their brothers and sisters, who are really like their second family. That's why they go over there, and that's why they go back again and again.

We have members in Iraq Veterans Against the War who are very opposed to the war, and they're thinking of reenlisting -- because they feel like their friends are going back, and they can't let them go by themselves.

People ask me: If the war is wrong, and soldiers know it, why don't they just not go? I think that leads to the bigger issue of war resisters. We were joking in the Iraq Veterans Against the War office that February and March are the two court-martial months, because Lt. Ehren Watada is being court-martialed at Fort Lewis on February 5, Spc. Mark Wilkerson at Fort Hood on February 22, and Specialist Agustín Aguayo in Germany on March 6.

There are all these public war resisters, taking the lead, following those who came before them, and standing up and saying no -- and putting themselves and their families at a big risk, because people are getting sentenced to prison.

Lt. Watada faces six years in prison, and the judge said that he couldn't use his defense, which is that the war is illegal. So basically, he has no defense. He's facing six years for refusing to go. Other men and women have spent up to a year in prison.

When people say that they support the war resisters, I think they really need to do more than just say, "Oh, that's great." Because these are men and women who are poised to lose everything. They can lose the people they care about, because a lot of their friends and family may not agree with their stance. And there's a huge financial drain as well, because attorneys are hugely expensive.

So I think this is really one of the crucial things -- to encourage GI resistance. We need for us all to put our money where our mouth is, so to speak--and really show that we're in solidarity with war resisters. We're going to be there.

AS FOR myself, I joined the National Guard in 1996. I was 17 years old, getting ready to graduate from high school, and I was looking for a way to pay for college. I wasn't quite sure how that was going to happen, and my stepfather kept encouraging me to talk to the National Guard recruiter--because the National Guard just stays home, trains one week a month, drinks coffee, sits around the armory, and if there's ever a blizzard or something, you'll be called out.

I was very reluctant, but I spoke to the recruiter finally, and I thought, this doesn't sound too bad. I told my best friend Elizabeth about it, and first, she made fun of me, but after a while, she said, "Wait, what were they telling you about college money, maybe I should talk to them." And of course, I said please talk to them, you should go in with me--because I was so nervous about joining the military.

So we signed up in high school as medics and started out going to college studying biology. I served one seven-month tour in the Balkans in 1999-2000, came back, continued going to school and was in a medical unit in Denver.

Then I got a phone call early in January 2003 from one of my sergeants, and he said, "I'm so sorry, but you've been involuntarily transferred to the 220th military police company. They're getting deployed, you're no longer a medic, now you're an MP, and you have to report tomorrow night."

I was in a state of shock. Every year I was in the military, I kept thinking that when I joined, I was really naïve, but now nothing can shock me. But then, lo and behold, something would happen, and I'd say, "Wow, that really shocked me." It's still happening by the way--getting calls in the office from people in the military and veterans and family members, and you say, wow, I didn't expect that.

So I went to the unit, and in February, we were deployed to Kuwait. And shortly after the war started, we moved into Iraq and spent about 10 months in southern Iraq, near the city of Nasiriya.

We were military police, so we did a lot of patrols and a lot of convoy escorts for fuel tankers and flatbed trucks--mostly for Kellogg Brown & Root, which is part of Halliburton. We would go up and down, north and south, from one military base to the other, basically supplying the U.S. military so that the occupation would continue.

There were hundreds, if not thousands, of these vehicles driving on the road, plus all the military vehicles, going past Iraqi village after village and cities that are completely destroyed by the bombing and the occupation. People are unemployed and don't have electricity. They're living in buildings that are halfway crumbling into the ground, there's no medical care, they can't go to school or work in safety--and we're taking tons and tons of trucks full of equipment to continue the occupation while people are sitting in squalor.

I really didn't know what to expect. I didn't agree with the war, but I felt like I was in a kind of impossible situation. We had left Kuwait, which is a very lavish, very wealthy small country. When you drive around in Kuwait City, it kind of reminds me of Vegas, because everything's brand new and well manicured, and everyone's driving Lamborghinis and Mercedes, and they have beautiful Gucci and Prada clothes on.

Then you go just a couple hours north and cross into Iraq, and the first sight you're greeted with as you drive over the border are scores of little children dressed in rags and covered in dirt, with bare feet, begging for food and water.

When we first went into Iraq, it wasn't very long after the war had started, and we were told to be prepared to fire your weapon and be attacked, because you're going into a war zone. But when we went in there, we didn't get attacked, and we didn't get shot at. Instead, we were having poverty-stricken children begging for food.

I think it kind of surprised us in a way, but it was so surreal that you just didn't really think about everything you were seeing--you just took it in and moved on.

WE WERE stationed outside Nasiriya, at Tallil air base, which is right next to a very ancient archeological site, the Ziggurat at Ur, which is a 4,000-year-old pyramid where Abraham from the Bible was from. It was a very good illustration of the fact that this land we had invaded and occupied after years of sanctions and two previous wars was really the cradle of civilization.

One time, a couple National Geographic reporters and photographers came to try to get on the base so they could go and see the ziggurat, and do a story about the ancient archeological sites of Iraq. It was an interesting juxtaposition between ancient archeology, and then seeing the U.S. occupation and all our military might.

With all the weapons we have, all of the training and all of the money, the U.S. military couldn't fix the problem of Iraqis not having security, not having food or water or electricity. For all the good that we can do theoretically, we weren't doing that, and we can't do that as a military occupation, because that's not what militaries do. Militaries fight wars; they don't rebuild countries.

I think when we went in, there were a lot of people in my unit who thought we have to go do this because Saddam Hussein's going to attack us--we just know it. On my first day with the military police company, I was late, and when I got there, one of the officers was addressing the company. She was talking about September 11, when those towers went down, and she was getting really emotional, and people were, I think, standing there feeling very patriotic--like, yes, that's why I have to go fight.

But then, a couple months later, when I was in Iraq, at that point, you just continue to do your job every day, hoping that you stay safe, hoping that no one in your unit gets hurt and hoping that you're going to come home soon.

We were very lucky, because no one in our company got attacked or killed, and we all came home, though there were some accidental injuries. But for a lot of my friends who I've met through Iraq Veterans Against the War, they didn't have that experience. They lost friends, they were injured themselves, they saw innocent people killed.

That really takes a toll on someone's soul to know they've been part of such a destructive force as a war. Even for us, while we may not have had anyone killed, it was definitely a daily risk we were taking -- driving up and down those highways in Iraq, pulling people over, doing home raids, doing traffic stops, doing convoy escorts, chasing hijackers across the desert.

For every car we stopped to look for terrorist contraband or weapons, the only thing we found in the area we were in was maybe one gun, because a Shepard was using it to protect his flock of camels or sheep. I'm not trying to downplay the seriousness of the situation, because there is a lot of violence in Iraq.

But for us, in the area we were in, it seemed like our purpose wasn't to help the Iraqi people -- because we basically had no interaction with them, apart from when we'd stop, and they'd come over and stand around our vehicles.

We had no translators, so when something would happen, and we'd be sent off to investigate, it was really pantomiming to someone who has no idea what you're talking about, and whose culture and language are really so far from ours, so there's really no way to have a conversation with them. And if we'd call for translators, it would take probably three hours, and we'd finally be told they can't make it--just deal with this situation.

A lot of times, the trucks we escorted were actually empty or just had a few things on them. I never really thought about it when I was in Iraq. I just assumed that if we were taking them north, they were going to pick something up, or if we were taking them south, they've dropped off their load.

It's only after I got back and started reading more about it that I found out that a lot of people working for the contractors, acting as whistleblowers, said, "Actually, we just drove north and south empty, or with one pallet on our truck." Because Halliburton doesn't get paid by how much cargo they deliver, they get paid by how many trucks are on the road.

That was kind of another realization for me, which I did understand in Iraq to a certain extent--that our lives were really not important when compared to corporate profits and the U.S. gaining dominance in the Middle East.

In the convoy escorts, a lot of times, trucks would break down on the side of the road, or get stuck in the mud, or get into an accident. So the driver would go on with the convoy, and leave the vehicle. Almost every time, it was near where there were Iraqi people. They would come around and try to take something from the trucks, because they were living in poverty and could probably sell it or use it somehow.

So we would have to go and act as crowd control and keep them back. We had rubber bullets, concussion grenades and beanbag shotgun shells. And we used those to keep the Iraqi people from the supposed U.S. asset.

These are unarmed civilians. Of course, every day that I went out, I thought maybe this is the day that someone's going to bring their AK-47 and shoot at one of us--and then, I knew, all hell would break loose. Luckily, in my experience, that never happened. But we did shoot civilians with rubber bullets, which are supposedly nonfatal, but can really hurt and even kill if it's an old person or a child.

We'd call Kellogg Brown & Root and say, "Could you please send a tow truck because your vehicle's broken down. This is an asset, and we've been ordered to guard it." And they'd say, okay, stand by. And then, after waiting there, guarding it and keeping these hundreds of Iraqis back for hours, we'd be told that they're not going to send anyone, so go ahead and abandon the vehicle.

The irony is that the people back at home--your family, your friends--are being told by the media and by the government that we're over there to help the Iraqi people and to promote freedom and democracy. And what you're doing really is using violence against a crowd of civilians to keep them away from a corporate asset--which really isn't even an asset because you're risking your life for three hours protecting it, and then you just abandon it, after all.

A lot of times, before we abandoned the trucks, we would be ordered to destroy them--whether that meant destroying the engine blocks so the vehicle couldn't be driven, or setting fire to the diesel fuel in the tanker truck. This would be a mile from a gas station with miles-long lines just for people to fill up their cars with gas, and we were burning fuel tankers full of diesel fuel.

In one instance, we pulled over because a flatbed truck was broken down, and there were pallets of food in the back. It was produce, and so, of course, they were going to spoil, because this was Iraq, and it was hot. There was a crowd of people, and myself and some of other soldiers were asking if we could let the people get the food, and destroy the trucks after that. And it was decided it was just going to be too hectic to let the people come in and get food, and then move them back again.

So we just sat there and burned produce, in front of people who are struggling to get by every day--not only under the occupation, but without jobs, without health care, without a lot of things that we take for granted.

It was hard--for me, at least--to drive around or do patrols and look the Iraqi people in the eye, because I felt very ashamed of what I was doing, and the part I had in the occupation. Maybe I didn't set fire to the fuel, but I stood and pointed a gun at people so that my colleagues could set fire to these vehicles.

I definitely questioned it every day, but at the time, you're in this situation where you can't just quit, and you also have an obligation to other people.

ANOTHER SITUATION that happened a lot was traffic accidents, caused either by the contracted semi trucks or by U.S. military vehicles. They would cause accidents with civilians, either on foot or in vehicles, because a lot of the areas they were driving through are heavily populated, and the U.S. military contracted convoys had orders to drive--you get to point A to point B as fast as possible, and you don't stop, because if you stop, you become a target.

In one situation that we responded to, a small boy--probably about 10 years old, I would say--had been crossing the highway, riding on one of his donkeys, with two more of his donkeys in tow, and a U.S. military transportation convoy headed north hit him and his donkeys, and they were all killed.

When we got there with the investigative team, there was this little body lying on the side of the road, covered with a sheet. There was his family sitting around him, just in shock. His grandfather was walking from across the desert, and when he saw what had happened, he just started wailing, and throwing his hands in the air, and then throwing his body on the ground, again and again. He came over, and his family had to restrain him, because he was trying to come over to us. Finally, he was sent away.

It seems really callous--you're driving a truck, and you hit a little boy, and you don't even stop. But at the same time, those are our orders. Also, even more importantly, I never knew who was driving the truck that killed that little boy, but I'm sure it was a lower enlisted person, probably in his or her twenties, who was in Iraq because that's where

they were ordered to be. They didn't wake up that morning thinking, "Gee, I really want to kill an Iraqi child."

One of my friends who's in Iraq Veterans Against the War was driving through a town in a transportation convoy in one of those big trucks, and on the back, they had a pallet of MREs, which is the packaged food. And little kids were around, begging for food.

One little kid jumped up on the back of his truck to get an MRE and slipped. He fell between the tires, and my friend ran him over and killed him. He said that was one of the worst days of his life, and he cannot get it out of his mind. He has nightmares about it all the time.

So, I think when we look at the victims of war, there are the veterans. And, of course, far more Iraqis are suffering under this occupation every day that it continues.

I think it's also important to realize that almost four years of occupation was preceded by crippling sanctions that left over half a million children under the age of 5 dead. And the first Gulf War, and the lengthy Iran-Iraq War, which was really fueled by weapons and intelligence from the United States.

Some people say--and this is kind of a sentiment I got from some of the soldiers over there--why don't the Iraqis just understand we're here to help them? We're trying to give them freedom and democracy like we have in the United States. Why are they so stupid and so lazy and dirty and poor?

The Iraqi people aren't stupid, and they know much better than probably any of us in this room or in this country just what the effects of U.S. involvement in their country are. Of course they want the occupation to end.

For those of us in Iraq Veterans Against the War, we really feel that where we can have the most impact as far as organizing to end this war immediately and bring our brothers and sisters home is by targeting the military itself. Because we've been part of the military at one point or another, and some of us still are.

We're the veterans and troops, so the people we can reach the best are the veterans and troops--to encourage them to resist, to encourage them to educate themselves, and to pass that knowledge on to other people, and really challenge the military's ability to continue conducting this war.

I think another key thing to focus on is the fact that if Congress stopped funding this war, the war would be over. I was with people from the Appeal for Redress when they came down to Washington to turn in their appeal, and we were going to congresspeople's and senators' offices, saying, "Here's a list of your constituents who are in the military, and they want the war to end. They signed this appeal."

Of course, what we heard a lot on the media about the response from the politicians was that we can't vote against the funding, because that's voting against our troops.

Not only that, but they would have the audacity to get very offended and say, “Well, don’t you know the congressperson has been against this war from the beginning?”

We were told by one aide, “Don’t you know that if we cut off funding, your friends in the military aren’t going to get paid?”

You can’t pull the wool over eyes.

I’m sorry, but we were getting paid in the military before the war started, and maybe we weren’t making as much as a Halliburton contractor, but there was a paycheck.

So if Congress cut off the money for this war, there’s enough to bring the troops home, quickly and safely and now.

I think this march today was really great.

I was really pleased with the IVAW, the people from the Appeal for Redress and all the military and the family members--although we really thought we should be at the front of the march.

We showed them that we’re organized, we have a voice, and we want people to listen to us.

We’re going to make it very hard to ignore--that we’re the veterans, we’re the troops, we’re against this war, and we want it to end.

We want our brothers and sisters brought home now, we want them taken care of when they get here, and we want reparations and assistance for the Iraqi people so they can rebuild their country.

MORE:

“They Should Have Been At The Front Of The March”

“Iraq Veterans Against The War Are The Vanguard Of The Antiwar Movement”

When these maniacs talk about supporting our troops, we have to be very clear what they mean. What they mean is supporting the *government*--no matter how many troops they kill, no matter how many lives they destroy, no matter how

many Iraqis they murder, no matter how much destruction they wreak, no matter how many veterans they abandon.

February 16, 2007 By Anthony Arnove. Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

AFTER THE huge antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C., on January 27, several hundred people packed into the back room of Busboys and Poets bookstore for a spirited, standing-room-only forum featuring author Anthony Arnove and Kelly Dougherty of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

I REALLY want to thank Kelly and all the comrades here from IVAW, who are really the vanguard of the antiwar movement. Even if they weren't at the front of the march, and they should have been at the front of the march, they were the forefront of the politics of this march.

From the beginning, IVAW has had three very simple demands, and I just want to reiterate them, because I think they're the demands that the antiwar movement needs to coalesce around.

-- The first demand: Immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from Iraq.

You notice that it's not that we have a plan how in 12 months, or maybe 18 months, or maybe three years, if certain benchmarks are met, if certain conditions are met, and if at such point a committee decides, then we'll withdraw. It's a very clear demand--we have no business staying in Iraq.

-- The second demand: Reparations and other compensation for the destruction and corporate pillaging of Iraq so that ordinary Iraqi people can control their own lives and future. This is not an isolationist position that doesn't care what happens to Iraqis. It's acknowledging the immense destruction and harm in Iraq.

As Kelly pointed out, this didn't begin in March 2003. There's a long history before March 2003, of twelve-plus years of sanctions, the 1991 Gulf War, the Iran-Iraq War and all of the years that the governments in Washington supported the dictator Saddam Hussein as he carried out his worst crimes. In fact, they supplied the lists that the Baath Party and Saddam Hussein used to slaughter the left in Iraq, so that they could rise to power.

Reparations to the Iraqi people is the IVAW's second demand, and it's a demand that all of us have to be adding to the demand for immediate withdrawal.

-- And the third demand: Full benefits, adequate health care, including mental health, and other supports for returning servicemen and women.

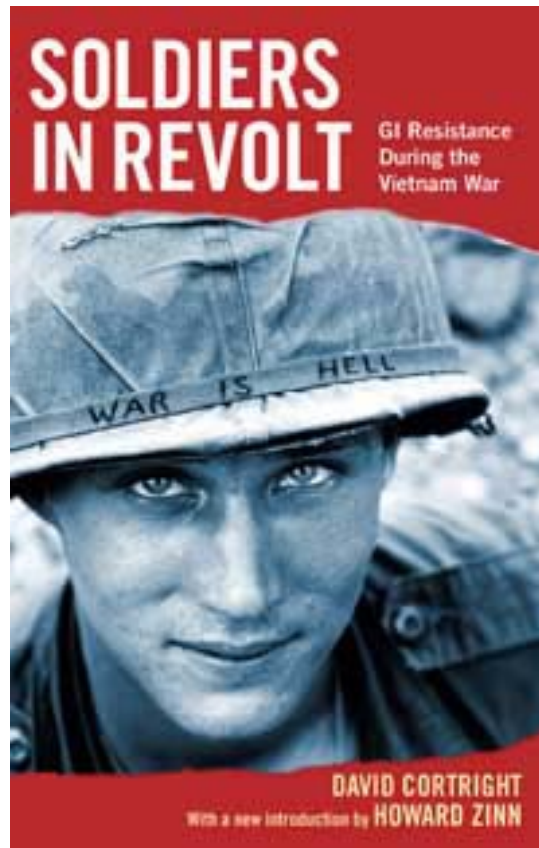
When these maniacs talk about supporting our troops, we have to be very clear what they mean.

What they mean is supporting the *government*--no matter how many troops they kill, no matter how many lives they destroy, no matter how many Iraqis they murder, no matter how much destruction they wreak, no matter how many veterans they abandon.

That's what they mean by "supporting our troops."

There's a book that everyone has to read: *Soldiers in Revolt*. We really have so many lessons to learn from the struggle of GIs during the Vietnam war.

There's also a film everyone needs to see called *Sir No Sir*, a documentary that's out now with a director's cut that has amazing supplementary material.



Soldiers in Revolt was originally published at the end of the Vietnam war by David Cortright, who was active in organizing GI resistance. And it documented a history that has been kept away from us--a history that has been deliberately manipulated.

We grew up on the myth that the antiwar movement was a bunch of hippies, stoners and students, and that the veterans and the American working class all supported the war, and they were spat on by the antiwar movement. It's a complete lie.

Soldiers and working-class people were in the vanguard of leading the struggle against the Vietnam war, and bringing an end to that war. This book documents that history, which we have a lot to learn from.

Kelly mentioned the group Appeal to Redress.

The way that group got its inspiration was from a soldier reading David Cortright's book, in the new edition which Haymarket Books published recently, with new material from Cortright and from Howard Zinn, the people's historian. That material connects the struggle against the war in Vietnam to the struggle against the occupation of Iraq today, and encouraging support for those soldiers who are speaking out.

The war abroad goes hand in hand with the war on working people, a war on poor people, a war on immigrants and a war on all of our civil liberties. We have to make those connections.

And the stronger we are, the more support we can lend to the soldiers, whose voices are so decisive. IVAW's work is so decisive, and all of us have to support it however we possibly can.

WE'RE ALMOST four years into the occupation of Iraq, and you have to laugh because the media says, "Oh, you're talking about a hasty withdrawal from Iraq."

So this isn't a hasty withdrawal that we're talking about. The United States had no right to invade in the first place, and it should get out immediately now.

But all of the reasons that they put forward for why we should stay in Iraq are as bogus as the reasons for why they said we had to go in.

Let's spend a moment on democracy.

First of all, right now, we're in Washington, D.C.

Would anyone like to speak to the level of democracy here in Washington, D.C.? We just had an election in November where the majority of people in this country said they want the troops to come home and they reject the policies of this administration.

And we have a president who says he doesn't give a damn, and a Congress that doesn't seem to have heard us either.

Is that a democracy?

We have an opposition party whose form of criticizing the occupation of Iraq is to pass a nonbinding resolution criticizing the escalation of an additional 21,500 troops--but not questioning the fundamental presence of the United States as an occupying power in Iraq.

It's not about the 21,500 additional troops alone. It's a whole package.

You cannot fund the war, you cannot support 132,000 troops in Iraq, as Hillary Clinton is doing, and say you're against the war. You're not--you're for the war.

The other argument we hear, of course, is that there will be civil war if the United States leaves--as if today, the United States has not created a civil war in Iraq. They say there will be violence and bloodshed if the United States leaves, as if there's not today violence and bloodshed.

And then they say we have to fight terrorism in Iraq.

The reality is that the U.S. is using terrorism in Iraq.

It is terrorizing the civilian population in Iraq, not in any way lessening the terror.

We have a new discourse that's developing in this country, and it's a very dangerous one--one that we're hearing a lot from a number of Democrats today.

Hillary Clinton recently gave a speech in which she said, in explaining that she wasn't going to give unconditional support to the Iraqi government, that they have to meet certain requirements. She asked, "How much are we willing to sacrifice" for the Iraqi people?

The argument we're hearing more and more is that we brought this wonderful gift of democracy and humanity and liberation to these people, but they just don't appreciate this wonderful thing that we've done for them. There's an idea that the tree of democracy somehow cannot take root in the hostile soil of Iraq.

There's a rhetoric developing about how it's the Iraqis' fault. Yes, maybe we made a few mistakes, maybe we should just send a few more troops, maybe we should have had a slightly different strategy, but at the end of the day, it's the fault of Iraqis.

What goes along with that is maybe we shouldn't be so focused on Iraq--we should be more focused on Iran, or maybe we should be more focused on Syria, or maybe we should be sending more troops to Afghanistan.

And all this doesn't address the reality that the United States is the fundamental source of instability in Iraq, and every day the occupation continues, life gets worse for the Iraqi people.

WE HEARD a lot today about George Bush. And it's easy to make fun of George Bush and hate George Bush, and we all do.

But I think we've got to see the bigger picture.

This is about more than George Bush. This is about more than the Republican Party. This is about more than Dick Cheney and this particular administration.

This is about U.S. empire. It's about Democrats and Republicans who have a bipartisan consensus on the idea of the United States being the regional hegemon in the Middle East and projecting its power internationally.

We've got to raise the fundamental questions about that, because so much is at stake for them in Iraq. It's not about democracy, it's not about civil war, and it's not about human rights.

It's about the fact that Iraq has the world's second-largest reserves of oil. It's about the fact that Iraq sits in a region with two-thirds of the world's oil reserves and most of the world's natural gas resources. It's about the fact that it's at the crossroads of the energy shipping routes for the world.

They see, down the line, countries of the world emerging as rivals economically and politically and militarily--countries like India, Russia, China and the nations in the European Union--which are far more dependent on energy resources of the Middle East. And the United States wants to dominate those resources--to have leverage and power against countries that could emerge as rivals to the U.S. as the world's sole superpower.

They are determined to hold on to that status, no matter what the price that's paid in the blood by U.S. soldiers, no matter what the price that's paid in the blood of Iraqis, no matter what the price that's paid globally.

But as much as is at stake for them in Iraq, we have to say that much more is at stake for us in seeing them defeated in Iraq.

Who has more at stake: Halliburton shareholders making profits off Iraq, or the people from New Orleans who still don't have homes as a result of what happened in Hurricane Katrina.

Who has more at stake: Dick Cheney and his corporate cronies, or the 80 million people in this country last year who went without health care during some significant period of time, and the 45 million who throughout the entire year had absolutely no health care at all.

Who has more at stake: Condoleezza Rice and her neocon friends, or the children who are being told they have no future--we're destroying the environment, and we will fight more wars over the diminishing resources of oil and natural gas, because we refuse to develop any alternatives to the rapacious corporate capitalism that is destroying the planet and leading to more conflicts, more wars, more destruction.

Around the world, people are saying no, as they were in the streets of Washington today. And in other cities: 10,000 on the streets of San Francisco, 5,000 in the streets of Los Angeles, 1,000 in Austin, Texas, 3,000 in Seattle.

The point is also that the character of the movement is changing. We are not on the defensive any longer.

Bush asked the other night: Who could have known that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?

We knew. Why were the people in this room not in the New York Times, on CNN?

They want to blame it all on bad intelligence, but we had the intelligence from the very beginning to see that this war is a disaster.

And we have the intelligence now to see through politicians who say that they're against the war, but vote to fund the war.

We have the intelligence to know that each day this occupation continues, the more we're at risk, the more Iraqis are at risk, and the more the world's at risk.

And we also have the intelligence to know that we can build a movement that can end this occupation and change this world, and we have everything at stake in doing so.



IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

BENEFIT HAPPY HOUR

Come support your local chapter of IVAW and hear about the amazing work we are doing to bring the troops home now!

★ WHEN

Sunday, February 18th 5pm-Midnight
(President's Day Weekend)

★ WHERE

Rocky Sullivan's at 129 Lexington. 212-725-3871
Between 28th & 29th St., a block away from the 6 train.

★ ADMISSION

Donation of \$15 at the door includes happy hour prices all night.

★ PROGRAM

- Special appearance by **Cindy Sheehan**
- **John McDonagh** Host of **Radio Free Eirean** and periodic veterans program on **WBAI**.
- **Iraq veterans** speak out.
- Iraqi testimonial read by a member of **Adalah-NY Middle East Crisis Committee**.
- Political comedy - **Randy Credico** and others.
- **Music** at 8pm featuring: **Ray Gerber, Seanchai,** and **Son of Nun**.



“The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops.” Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War

Troops Invited:

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email contact@militaryproject.org:. Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

**REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



A soldier uses a rope to get from one floor to another at his barracks at an unfinished power plant occupied by the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry of the Tenth Mountain Division in Youssifiyah, 12 miles south of Baghdad, Jan. 24, 2007. The Youssifiyah power plant compound is now a makeshift base for 300 U.S. and Iraqi soldiers. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo, File)

Marine Killed In Anbar

17 February 2007 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
RELEASE No. 20070217-06

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – A Marine assigned to Multi-National Force-West was killed Feb. 16 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar Province.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

This Is The Good News? **Help Available For Canadian Troops In Case Of Disaster**

February 17, 2007 Mike Blanchfield, CanWest News Service

OTTAWA: "I'm quite pleased with our allies in the north and the west. I think we may have enough now in the south and the east to do the job," [Canadian] Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said Friday.

Canada has spent months at various NATO meetings trying to persuade those allies to remove the so-called "caveats" that prevent them from moving their troops into the southern region, where the Taliban is strongest and concentrating its efforts.

"The allies and the rest of the countries have confirmed they will come to the assistance of the south in emergencies," O'Connor added.

Canada has 2,500 troops based in the Kandahar region, and has warned in recent months that if more allies don't step up to do more in that region it might have to pull out.

Why Afghans Just Love The Occupation: **“They Would Take Us To Guantanamo, Bagram Or Kandahar”**

Feb 17 by Nasrat Shoiab (AFP)

Villagers who fled a small Afghan town captured by Taliban two weeks ago say fear of NATO strikes and being mistaken for militants are keeping them from their homes, even though supplies are running low.

Around 1,500 families from Musa Qala, in the southern province of Helmand, have collected in surrounding areas since the remote town was overrun by Taliban fighters, the provincial refugee head Abdul Satar Mazhari told AFP.

"If we go home and bombing starts on Taliban, there is no difference between us and Taliban," Tor Jan said.

"They would take us to Guantanamo, Bagram or Kandahar," he said, referring to US military detention facilities.

TROOP NEWS

**THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



The casket of Marine Cpl. Thomas E. Saba at the Moravian Cemetery, Feb. 16, 2007 in the Staten Island borough of New York. Saba died Feb. 7, 2006 when the helicopter he was flying in crashed in Al Anbar province, Iraq. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



[Thanks to David Honish, Veteran, who sent this in.]

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Toxic Trailers From FEMA Poisoning Katrina Survivors: “Many Of Them Were Dying”

[Thanks to Katherine GY, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

February 15, 2007 By Amanda Spake, The Nation [Excerpts]

FEMA-supplied trailers for displaced Gulf Coast residents have been found to emit formaldehyde vapors, causing serious health problems.

Along the Gulf Coast, in the towns and fishing villages from New Orleans to Mobile, survivors of Hurricane Katrina are suffering from a constellation of similar health problems. They wake up wheezing, coughing and gasping for breath. Their eyes burn; their heads ache; they feel tired, lethargic. Nosebleeds are common, as are sinus infections and asthma attacks. Children and seniors are most severely afflicted, but no one is immune.

There's one other similarity: The people suffering from these illnesses live in trailers supplied by the Federal Emergency Management Administration.

An estimated 275,000 Americans are living in more than 102,000 travel trailers and mobile homes that FEMA purchased after Hurricane Katrina. The price tag for the trailers was more than \$2.6 billion, according to FEMA.

Despite their cost of about \$15,000 each, most are camperlike units, designed for overnight stays. Even if the best materials had been used in their construction -- and that is a point of debate -- they would not be appropriate for full-time living, according to experts on mobile homes. The interiors are fabricated from composite wood, particle board and other materials that emit formaldehyde, a common but toxic chemical.

"Formaldehyde is a very powerful irritant," says Mary DeVany, an industrial hygienist in Vancouver, Washington. "When you inhale the vapors ... the breathing passages close off." The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified formaldehyde as a human carcinogen. The Environmental Protection Agency has said that more than 0.1 parts per million of formaldehyde in air can cause eye, lung and nose irritation. Few scientists dispute the chemical's power to worsen respiratory health. Yet there is no federal standard for formaldehyde in indoor air, or for travel trailers, and no consensus on whether any "safe" level exists.

Last summer FEMA began distributing a leaflet to trailer residents explaining that the materials used in the interiors can release toxic vapors. The agency suggests residents keep windows and doors open and the air conditioner on, yet reduce heat and humidity. (The Gulf's hot, humid climate increases the rate at which materials release formaldehyde.)

FEMA has not responded to requests for the total number of complaints it has received about formaldehyde -- some media reports put the number at forty-six. The agency does say that seventeen trailers in Louisiana had to be replaced because of the chemical.

Many residents suffering from symptoms, however, are afraid to complain to FEMA, fearing the agency will take away the only housing they can afford.

It was complaints of respiratory problems to the Sierra Club that led the organization to test fifty-two FEMA trailers last April, June and July. Some 83

percent of the thirteen different types tested had formaldehyde in the indoor air at levels above the EPA recommended limit.

Air sampling by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at holding stations where groups of trailers were kept before they were set up revealed high formaldehyde levels even in outdoor air. At the holding station in Pass Christian, Mississippi, formaldehyde in outdoor air was thirty to fifty times the level recommended by the EPA, and several times OSHA's workplace standard.

One of the first to notice an unusual number of illnesses among trailer residents was pediatrician Scott Needle of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

"I was seeing kids and families coming in with repeated, prolonged respiratory illnesses - sinus infections, lingering coughs, viral infections that didn't go away," Needle says.

The mothers told him that their children had never been sick like this before. Some of the infants had to be hospitalized.

"Over the course of three months, I saw several dozen families with these health problems. That's really high, and this isn't something I'd seen in my practice before. All of them were living in FEMA trailers."

Angela Orcut, a preschool teacher, and her three year-old son, Nicholas, are typical of Needle's patients. "Ever since we've lived in this trailer, Nickie wakes up every morning choking and coughing," Orcut says. "He's had so many sinus infections since we moved in here." At night, when the family returns to the closed-up trailer, "the smell burns our noses and our eyes," she says.

Like many trailer residents, Orcut has not filed a complaint with FEMA. "I'm afraid if I complain, they'll take the trailer away," she says. "Then where will we live?"

Paul and Melody Stewart have a similar story to tell about their health problems, which began shortly after moving into a FEMA trailer at the site of their storm-ravaged house. "When we got here, it smelled bad," says Paul, a former Waveland, Mississippi, policeman.

"Melody woke up the first night they stayed in the trailer, gasping for air. "Within a week," he says, "we both had nosebleeds."

One morning the Stewarts found their cherished pet cockatiel lethargic and unable to stand. They rushed the bird to the vet, who said the cockatiel would die if he were kept in the trailer. Stewart began doing research and discovered that the wood products used to make cabinets, walls and other interior parts could emit formaldehyde, especially in hot, humid climates.

He bought a testing kit for airborne contaminants and sent it back for analysis. In winter, with windows open and the air conditioner on, the test showed, the formaldehyde level in the Stewarts' trailer was more than two times the EPA's limit.

Still, FEMA refused to replace the trailer until a story about the Stewarts' formaldehyde problems ran on the local television news. FEMA called the next day to say they were bringing a new trailer.

When the new trailer arrived, the couple could smell formaldehyde before they opened the door. Another was delivered with mold covering the walls.

The Stewarts lived in their truck until they took what remained of their insurance settlement and their retirement savings to buy a new trailer at a dealer's lot. This one was made with low-formaldehyde-emitting materials. Their respiratory problems are gone, but plans to rebuild their home are on hold.

Hilda Nelson, 75, of Coden, Alabama, was not as lucky as the Stewarts. When she moved into a FEMA trailer at the site of her former house, she was in good health, says her son, Paul. Three weeks later, he says, "she was having trouble breathing." Not long after, she was diagnosed with pneumonia, then congestive heart failure, a chronic illness that can cause breathing difficulties.

In June 2006 Paul Nelson ordered a kit to test his mother's trailer for formaldehyde. The results showed the level of the chemical inside her trailer was 50 percent over the EPA's recommended limit.

Scientists familiar with toxics agree that elderly people, like infants, are highly susceptible to the hazards of formaldehyde, particularly if they have underlying illnesses.

"We started testing in Alabama," explains Becky Gillette, co-chair of the Mississippi Sierra Club, "because we got reports from social workers there that so many elderly people living in the trailers were being hospitalized for respiratory conditions. And many of them were dying."

In October 2006, at the age of 76, Hilda Nelson died, one year and one month after moving into her FEMA trailer. Doctors "never had an answer" as to why her health deteriorated so quickly, says her son. "But I have my suspicions. I point the finger at the formaldehyde."

When Katrina hit, the federal government had standing contracts with a number of companies to provide goods and services during natural disasters, including firms that manufacture, haul, set up and maintain temporary housing. Given the unprecedented number of people displaced by Katrina, FEMA contracted with the major trailer makers, such as Gulf Stream Coach, Fleetwood Enterprises, Monaco Coach and others, to provide more than 100,000 travel trailers.

Only 14,000 of them were standard trailers, purchased "off the lot" from retail dealers. The majority were stripped-down models, described as "no frills units" by the marketing director of Gulf Stream, which landed a \$521 million contract to make 50,000 trailers for FEMA.

Trailer manufacturers set up ad hoc assembly lines, advertised in local newspapers and hired temporary workers to fill FEMA orders at breakneck speed.

"Under the best of conditions, some trailer manufacturers do not really have good quality control," says Connie Gallant, president of the RV Consumer Group, a nonprofit that rates the quality of mobile housing and trailers. "In a mass production frenzy, that quality control pretty much goes out the window."

One critical quality-control question concerns the construction materials used in the trailers.

In Indiana, where Gulf Stream and a number of other trailer firms are located, companies were scrambling to find enough construction materials. Scientists and housing experts believe that the materials used to fabricate the FEMA trailers may have been imported from countries that produce high-formaldehyde-emitting particle board and composite woods.

A class-action lawsuit was filed against FEMA and some trailer manufacturers in Louisiana in June on behalf of residents suffering from respiratory and flu-like illnesses they attribute to formaldehyde inside their trailers.

Sean Trundy, an attorney for the plaintiffs, says that after he filed the lawsuit, several Indiana workers, hired temporarily by the trailer makers, contacted him. They had come down with similar illnesses while working on the trailers.

"One complained that his ears ruptured and bled. Many had nosebleeds, headaches and flu-like symptoms. Some were coughing up blood," says Trundy, who plans to call them as witnesses as the residents' case progresses.

"They told me some wood products came from Africa. The longer they continued to produce FEMA trailers, the worse the materials got. Apparently the manufacturer's regular suppliers could not keep up with demand."

Trundy hired an independent testing lab in Pennsylvania to evaluate some plaintiffs' trailers. Formaldehyde levels in the living room of one were more than three times the EPA's limit, according to the lab's report. The Pennsylvania lab recommended that "residents should move from the affected dwellings until formaldehyde levels can be lowered."

Even if imported materials that release high levels of formaldehyde were used, says air expert Thad Godish, "it's perfectly legal, because there are no standards."

One reason, says the RV Consumer Group's Gallant, is that travel trailers are intended only for short trips, not full-time living. But FEMA's James McIntyre says that travel trailers "have traditionally been used in disasters for temporary housing."

He adds, "Cost is one factor."

A mobile home for full-time use costs in excess of \$30,000, but a travel trailer is half that, or less.

Whatever specifications FEMA may have set for trailer manufacturers regarding formaldehyde, they have not been made public.

In Congressional hearings last February, Richard Skinner, the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security, testified that some trailer contracts "did not specify minimum specifications requirements, making it possible that some trailers ... had significant deficiencies." Even those made according to specifications, Skinner said, were accepted by FEMA "without any formal inspection procedures."

FEMA has now undertaken testing of its trailers. At FEMA's request, the EPA recently sampled air in 96 unoccupied trailers that FEMA calls comparable to those used by Katrina evacuees, and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are analyzing the results.

But Bay St. Louis pediatrician Scott Needle questions this approach. "What is the problem with testing the trailers that people are living in?" he asks.

He tried to convince the Mississippi Department of Health and the CDC to do an independent study on the illnesses. The state, he says, told him, "We don't have anyone to spare right now." The CDC agreed that such a study would be a good idea, he says, but the federal agency has to be asked to help by the state. Mississippi hasn't asked.

For its part, the Mississippi Department of Health says it "does not have statutory authority to regulate indoor air quality, including formaldehyde within travel trailers." Needle says he wasn't asking for regulation, just investigation.

The department, however, says it never received his request for an investigation.

Last month FEMA agreed that those displaced by Katrina could remain in their trailers until August of this year. That's six months longer than the eighteen months mandated by federal law. No one expects this to be long enough. Very little new or affordable housing is being built on the Gulf Coast, and prices and rents for existing homes have skyrocketed because of the short supply.

Though \$388 million was awarded to five states in December to design new model homes for use after disasters, survivors of the next storm are more likely to benefit. It seems clear that many Katrina evacuees living in FEMA trailers will be in them for months, if not years.

Democratic Representatives Henry Waxman and Charlie Melancon wrote to R. David Paulison, director of FEMA, last summer, asking about the formaldehyde-emitting materials used in the trailers and steps being taken to prevent exposure.

John D'Araujo, FEMA's director of recovery, responded by describing the leaflet the agency distributes about ventilation, and noted its agreement with the EPA to test some unoccupied trailers. No test results or new recommendations have been released.



[Thanks to David Honish, Veteran, who sent this in.]

Welcome To Occupied New York City;

Out Of Control Racist Cops At Work: “86 Percent Of All Those Stopped Were Black Or Latino”

February 16, 2007 By Jared Rodriguez, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

A NEW report released last week by the New York Police Department on its stop-and-frisk statistics for 2006 has added fuel to the blaze of outrage ignited by the police killing of Sean Bell on his wedding day last November.

More than half a million people were stopped by the NYPD in 2006, according to the report, a 500 percent increase in police stops since 2003.

Arrests doubled over the same period.

The report also shows that almost 86 percent of all those stopped were Black or Latino, showing that the NYPD’s practice of racial profiling is alive and well.

The report is further proof of what activists have been saying for years -- that while the NYPD had racially diversified its force, the practice of racial profiling has grown sharply, with September 11 attacks in particular providing the justification.

Meanwhile, tensions remain high in New York City as Queens District Attorney Richard Brown drags his feet on the decision about indicting the cops who murdered Sean Bell. Bell's killing in the early morning hours of November 25--when police opened fire on a vehicle he was sitting in with two friends--sparked a huge protest numbering as high as 40,000 in December.

The latest report on police stops only reinforces the urgency of organizing a fightback.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

GI Special issues are archived at website <http://www.militaryproject.org> .

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