

GI SPECIAL 6H13:



**“Turn Your Weapon
Against Those Who Sent
You To War!”**

**“Russian, Georgian, Ossetic
And Abkhazian Soldiers! Do
Not Obey The Orders Of Your
Commanders!”**

**“No To The War And To Its
Organizers - Rulers And
Richmen!”**

**“Yes To Solidarity Of Working People
Across Borders And The Front
Lines!”**

**НЕТ НОВОЙ ВОЙНЕ НА КАВКАЗЕ
[NO TO NEW CAUCASIAN WAR!]**

[Thanks to Dave Stratman, who sent this in. Translated from Russian. Chances that this will happen now? Slim to none. Chances any soldier who reads it will ever forget the ideas expressed? Slim to none. Chances that someday, somewhere, a lot of soldiers will do just what this message advocates? Inevitable. It wouldn't be the first time. T]

August 12, 2008 Federation of Education, Science and Technical Workers - CRAS-IWA

The eruption of military actions between Georgia and South Ossetia threatens to develop into a large-scale war between Georgia supported by NATO on the one hand, and the Russian state on the other.

Thousands of people are already killed and wounded - principally, peaceful inhabitants; whole cities and settlements have been wiped out.

The society has been flooded with muddy streams of a nationalist and chauvinistic hysteria. ---- As always and everywhere in conflicts between the states, there is not and cannot be the righteous in new Caucasian war - there are only the guilty.

The coals which have been fanned for years now have caused a military fire.

The Saakashvili regime in Georgia keeps two thirds of population in poverty, and the greater internal discontent in the country this causes, the more it desires to find a way out from the deadlock in the form of a “small victorious war” in the hope, that it can write everything off.

The government of Russia is full of determination to keep the hegemony in the Caucasus.

Today they pretend to be the defender of weak, but their hypocrisy is abundantly clear: in fact, Saakashvili only repeats what the Putinist soldiery did in Chechnya 9 years ago.

Ruling circles of both Ossetias and Abkhazia aspire to strengthen their role as exclusive allies of Russia in the region, and at the same time to rally the impoverished population around the tested torch of the “national idea” and “rescue the people”.

Leaders of the USA, the European states and NATO, on the contrary, wish to weaken the influence of their Russian rivals in the Caucasus as much as possible to provide to themselves with control over fuel resources and their transport.

Thus, we became witnesses and victims of the next coil of world opposition in struggle for power, oil and gas.

This fight does not bring to working people - Georgians, Ossets, Abkhazians or Russians - anything, except for blood and tears, incalculable disasters and deprivation.

We express our deep sympathy to the friends and relatives of the victims, to the people which have been left without a roof over their head and means of subsistence as a result of this war.

We shouldn't fall under the influence of nationalist demagogy which demands unity with “our” government, flying the flag of “protecting the homeland”.

The main enemy of the simple people is not the poor brothers and sisters on the other side of the border or of other nationality.

Their enemies are the rulers and bosses of all kinds, presidents and ministers, businessmen and generals, those who generate wars for the sake of multiplying power and riches.

We call on the working people in Russia, Ossetias, Abkhazia and Georgia to reject the bait of nationalism and patriotism and to turn the anger on rulers and the rich on both sides of the border.

Russian, Georgian, Ossetic and Abkhazian soldiers!

Do not obey the orders of your commanders!

Turn your weapon against those who sent you to war!

Do not shoot the soldiers of your “opponent” - fraternize with them: a bayonet in the ground!

Working people in the rear!

Sabotage military efforts, leave to go to meetings and demonstrations against the war, organize yourselves and strike against it!

No to the war and to its organizers - rulers and richmen!

Yes to solidarity of working people across borders and the front lines!

Federation of Education, Science and Technical Workers, CRAS-IWA

This declaration is open for signatures

Related Link: <http://avtonom.org/index.php>

MORE:

U.S. To Russia: Hands of Our Pawn!

“The Russians, For Their Part, Could Not Afford Rebellion Again In ‘Their’ Backyard”

“After All, They Killed Tens Of Thousands Of Chechnyans In The Region Just North Of Georgia In Two Wars To Hold Onto What Remained Of Their Empire”

August 13, 2008 By Pham Binh, Prisonerofstarvation.blogspot.com

The sight of Condi Rice and Bush wringing their hands over Russia’s assault on Georgia was pretty funny.

All of the sudden, Bush was concerned about a heavily armed and dangerously lethal big power bombing the crap out of some poor little small country’s civilian airport, almost six years after U.S. and British planes did the same thing to Basra’s airport before the invasion.

All of the sudden, Rice started talking about respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other nations, after supporting the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, not to mention Israel’s half-assed incursion into Lebanon.

Even a blind neocon should be able to see the hypocrisy in this whining.

The fact of the matter is that this war has been simmering for a decade or more.

The Georgian government claims South Ossetia and Abkhaza is its turf, but the people who live there have the audacity to disagree.

The Russian government skillfully exploited the anti-Georgian sentiment, taking these nationalists under its wing, thereby expanding their empire.

Meanwhile the American government sent guns, money, and aid to the Georgian government as part of its drive to encircle Russia militarily from Europe to Central Asia.

Think of it as a “Freedom Curtain” descending across the Eurasian landmass (freedom not included).

Georgia was pretty close to being a NATO member, which would've extended the American-controlled alliance from Europe into Central Asia:



Georgia's President, who has law degrees from George Washington University and Columbia, launched an attack on Ossetia, hoping to seize it quickly while the world was focused on the Olympics in Beijing.

He thought the Russians wouldn't dare attack an American pawn. Boy was he wrong.

The Russians, for their part, could not afford rebellion again in “their” backyard.

After all, they killed tens of thousands of Chechnyans in the region just north of Georgia in two wars to hold onto what remained of their empire after the USSR's demise.



They weren't about to allow some American quisling give them the finger, especially when they had overwhelming military superiority and popular support in the disputed regions.

The motive for the war on the Russian side, however, was much more than wanting to maintain regional clout for its own sake, or because of some ahistorical longing to restore the Tsar's imperium.

It was about resources, energy, and who controls them.

That this was the underlying motive for the war became clear when Russian hit the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (the green line in the picture above), threatening Western Europe's energy supply.

They were sending a message: back off, we've got you by the balls.

Here's how Lance Selfa explained the imperialist tensions in the region in an issue of the ISR shortly after 9/11:

“So, despite the fact that the shortest and most economically viable shipment route would lie through Iran to the Persian Gulf, the U.S. has campaigned for a 1,100-mile pipeline from Baku, Azerbaijan, through Georgia to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

“This pipeline (and other similar routes) is aimed to keep Caspian Sea oil and gas away from Iran and the Soviet-era routes that run through Russia.

The U.S. has sought ways to drive wedges between the former Soviet republics and Russia so that they will sell their natural resources to the West.



“This U.S. concern with promoting “independent, sovereign states that are able to defend themselves” ... serves the purpose of further weakening the ex-superpower in Moscow. To prevent this, Russia has tried to assert its remaining power over the Central Asian republics (Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan).”

Add Georgia to that list.

The remarkable thing in all this is that the U.S., the self-proclaimed sole superpower in the world, has been reduced to pleading, whining, and denouncing Russia’s assault verbally because there is very little it can do about it, politically, economically, or militarily.

So despite the ridiculous gap in military spending between the U.S. and the rest of the world put together (see below), Iraq and Afghanistan have all but taken the military option off the table, whether the target is the Big Bad Russian Bear, isolated Iran, or starving North Korea.

Sanctions are also not on the table, given Russia’s key role as a supplier of oil and natural gas to the world market.

The days when the International Monetary Fund had to bailout their basket case of an economy presided over by the governing-while-intoxicated Boris Yeltsin are long, long gone.

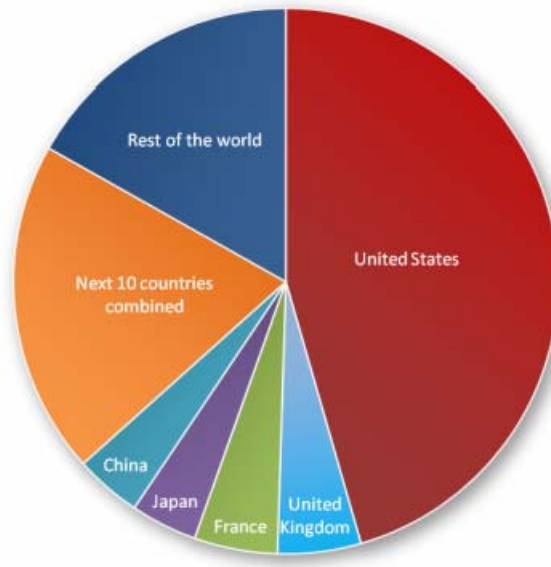
Russia’s capitalists have gotten rich off of oil and natural gas sales (in 1998, a barrel of oil was \$9, in 2002 it was \$30, and today it stands at over \$100).

That growing wealth has made the Kremlin more confident at home (jailing a billionaire, for example) and increasingly aggressive abroad, leading to more and more conflicts with the U.S. which has also become increasingly aggressive in its drive to dominate the globe in the wake of 9/11.

As the struggle for energy intensifies, expect to see more wars as the world's most powerful countries come into conflict with each other, their respective pawns, and with energy-rich nations over the fuel on which their economies depend.

Iraq, Afghanistan, and Georgia are just the beginning.

Global Distribution of Military Expenditure in 2006



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook 2007

ACTION REPORTS

My Visit To Ft. McCoy:

**“Many Of The Troops Waved Back At
Us And Less Than A Handful Gave
Us The Finger”**

**“We Even Got A Few Peace Signs From
Those In Uniform Or Those In PT Gear!”**



Letting them know that they are not alone in their concerns and do have the right to speak out and let the rest of the state including their governor who won't act in their best interests know that they oppose the occupation.

11 Aug 2008 by Todd E. Dennis [Iraq Veterans Against The War] Ted.gnn.tv/blogs
[Excerpts]

Back in April I found out about the Witness Against War walk being put on by Voices for Creative Nonviolence. Kathy Kelly was at a member meeting for the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice, where I am a work study student, since my GI Bill was just used up it is a great opportunity to use government funds to support my anti-war work.

The walk started on July 12th, which is Henry David Thoreau's birthday.

The objectives of the walk are:

The complete and immediate withdrawal of all U.S. military forces from Iraq.

The complete end to all U.S. military action against Iraq, whether that action be from the air, ground or sea.

An end to any further funding for U.S. military action in or against Iraq.

Full funding for the highest quality health care, housing and education for U.S. veterans and their families; the end of stop-loss/stop-move orders in the military.

Provision of full funding by the U.S. for the reconstruction of Iraq following the damage caused by these past 18 years of economic and military warfare waged by the U.S. upon Iraq.

The unconditional cancellation of the remaining odious debt incurred by Saddam Hussein's regime and of the reparations imposed by the U.N. against Iraq following the Hussein regime's 1990-91 invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

Redirection of U.S. -financial resources away from waging war and towards providing for the Common Good in the U.S.—universal health care; free public education at all levels; affordable housing; etc.

During the walk I talked with Dan, the Co-Coordinator for Voices about what was planned at Ft. McCoy.

It seemed interesting that they were going to attempt to walk onto the base and let soldiers know about the GI Rights Hotline so they were aware of their rights as military members if they had concerns about their pending deployment.

As we neared the gate I went to make sure that I was holding one of the GI Rights signs with my Iraq Veterans Against the War shirt visible to any military members who drove by during the action part of the walk.

So how were we received is probably what some are wondering.

Overwhelmingly supportive is how I would judge the response by vehicles, military and civilian.

Many of the troops waved back at us and less than a handful gave us the finger, we even got a few peace signs from those in uniform or those in PT gear!

They know their situation and from discussions I have been having with local folks still in the Guard and Reserves they just don't know what they can do to not be sent to Iraq if they don't agree with the war.

By carrying the GI Rights sign for the last 3 miles of the base and posting GI Rights cards in the surrounding communities we are reaching out to those most affected by the continued occupations of Iraq Afghanistan.

Letting them know that they are not alone in their concerns and do have the right to speak out and let the rest of the state including their governor who won't act in their best interests know that they oppose the occupation.

Thus the first of many future visits to the largest base in my state comes to a close after an exhausting but at the same time energizing day of working to end the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

I am energized from the responses we saw and from the fact that this was the closest I have come to a base since I was discharge.

I believe it was one of my triggers and whenever I have confronted recruiters or sometimes even seen people in military uniform I have been extremely affected by uncontrolled shaking of my body and inability to speak due to the extreme hatred of how I was betrayed and lied to before and during my military service about the true intentions of U.S. foreign policy these triggers brought out.

During this action I had none of these what had almost become normal responses and believe that partaking in this action has helped me cross those barriers that have affected my ability to do outreach to troops in the past.

So I am excited to continue the efforts to inform troops at Ft. McCoy and locally in Madison of their rights.



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, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 917.677.8057

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 GI Special 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.

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.

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

If accidentally included, that information will not be published.

The sole exception: occasions when a member of the armed services explicitly directs his or her name be listed as reporting on the action.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Felled Soldier Wanted To Serve

08/06/2008 By Brandon Lowrey, Staff Writer; Daily News

PORTER RANCH - Maria Luisa Avneri got a call early Friday from her son, U.S. Army Pvt. Jair De Jesus Garcia, stationed in Afghanistan.

"I'm OK, just going on a little mission now," the 29-year-old soldier told his mother. "So if you don't hear from me for a couple of days, don't worry, I'll be back."

That night, her heart filled with joy when she spotted a man in a green uniform walking toward her house.

Was it Jair? Was his “little mission” a surprise trip home to visit mom?

Hardly able to contain her excitement, she called to her husband to come to the door.

Just then, another soldier stepped into view. Within an instant, she no longer wanted to open the door.

“I knew what they were coming to say,” Avneri said.

There was an explosion, they told her, and her youngest son was dead.

Jair Garcia was killed Friday by a roadside bomb in Chowkay Valley, Afghanistan, along with three other soldiers.

On Tuesday, relatives remembered Garcia - who leaves behind a wife and a 9-year-old son - as a proud soldier and loving father who would do anything to please those he cared for.

“He really believed in what he was doing as far as being in the military,” said 31-year-old Eddie Garcia, one of his three siblings. “We were very supportive of him. We understood that this is what made him the happiest.”

“You couldn’t be around him without laughing,” his mother said. “He was always volunteering.”

Garcia, a Birmingham High School grad, had told relatives he was upset about the state of the world and felt he had to do something about it. So he joined the Army last fall. In June, he left for Afghanistan.

In the Army, Garcia was happy. Even though family members had tried to talk him out of enlisting last year, his enthusiasm infected them. “You should have seen his face. And you could see it on his pictures if you could only see them,” Avneri said. “He was very, very proud of what he was doing.”

He always had a talent for reading people and relating to them.

Named after a Brazilian soccer star from the 1960s, Garcia was once an assistant soccer coach at Fulton College Preparatory in Van Nuys, said Eddie Garcia, who also coached the team.

He believed in the kids, and did everything he could to mentor them and keep them on a positive path. When he was with them, his brother said, he was able to fit in as one of the guys.

“The kids loved him, he loved the kids,” he said. “The guys had a lot of respect for him, aside from being in the military. He had a lot of friends.”

On Tuesday, the kids on the soccer team hadn't been informed that Garcia had been killed in action. A few are going to take it especially hard, Eddie Garcia said.

As a child, Jair Garcia had a keen interest in the arts. He loved opera and played several piano recitals. But when he entered Birmingham High School, he traded the ivory keys for the pigskin and joined the football team.

He and Eddie shared a bedroom for 10 years growing up, along with their most personal secrets and tidbits about each other's girlfriends.

"Him and I had this thing where no matter how upset we were, whenever we left a room, no matter how pissed off or how upset we were, the last thing we would say is we love each other," Eddie Garcia said. "That's just how he was, with everybody."

Garcia was always close to his family and made it a point to visit every Sunday until he shipped out.

His family has pulled together over the loss. In addition to his son, wife, mother and brother Eddie, Jair is survived by his father, his sister, and another brother.

Jair Garcia's son is too young to fully understand the concept of death, Eddie Garcia said.

The boy asked his grandmother if there's sushi in heaven, because his dad loved it. She told him there's all-you-can-eat sushi up there.

His mother reflected on her youngest son's childhood, when she took him to his first opera: "Madame Butterfly."

"He saw the part when the son is taken away from the mother, and he started crying," she said. "He was a beautiful baby. He'll always be a beautiful baby to me."

Successful Afghan Occupation Would Take Only 450,000 U.S. Troops

8.14.08 Bartle Breese Bull, New York Times

The foreign editor of Prospect magazine writes from London that the invasion of Afghanistan was a great tactical success and the correct strategic move. Yet since then, it seems as if the United States has been trying to turn the conflict into the Vietnam War of the early 21st century.

Escalating in Afghanistan to "must-win" status means, according to one estimate, deploying three times as many troops as were sent to Iraq at the height of the surge there.

If Americans really believe — as Barack Obama in particular argues — that Afghanistan is the right war and a place appropriate for Iraq-style nation-building, then they must understand both the cost involved and the remote likelihood of success.

TROOP NEWS



Learning the Language of War

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

**Iraq Veteran Says "If They Call Me
Back I'm Not Going To Go"
"It's The People That Are Going To Make
The Change. Not The Elected Officials"**



August 13, 2008 By Ann Coleman, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

BOSTON--An antiwar protest successfully shut down the Armed Forces Career Center here on August 2 before a single person showed up to demonstrate. Just the advertisement and organizing efforts for the protest forced the center, heavily guarded by Boston police, to close for the day.

The demonstration, which grew in size to more than 200, was called by the University of Massachusetts (UMass)-Boston Antiwar Coalition (a chapter of the Campus Antiwar Network, or CAN), and reached out to organizations including Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) Boston, Veterans for Peace, the International Socialist Organization, the Stop the Wars Coalition, Socialist Alternative and the American Friends Service Committee.

Through flyering, tabling efforts and Internet organizing, the protest attracted new young activists, including students from UMass-Amherst and Newton South High School. For many, this was their first protest.

High school student Jessica Mitter was visiting Boston for the day with three friends when they saw the protest. "We were bused up here from our summer program at Brown University. When we saw the protest, we had to join in. I'd much rather do this than go shopping," said Mitter, who has her own political radio show in her home town of College Station, Texas.

"This is the first demonstration I've seen in Boston in nine months," said one passerby who joined in. "We need to do this every weekend."

This was the first demonstration organized by the UMass CAN chapter, which is now heading into the fall with a renewed sense of urgency and a focus to build activities like teach-ins, a divestment campaign, and an October 11 demonstration on the Boston Common.

Mike Spinnato, a member of IVAW and CAN, and one of the organizers of the protest, spoke at the closing rally.

“I will resist at all costs. If they call me back I’m not going to go. I will never go quietly. I’m not afraid of their jails,” said Spinnato.

“It’s the people that are going to make the change. Not the elected officials.”

FUTILE EXERCISE: ALL HOME NOW!



U.S. soldiers from 1/22 Infantry Battalion search an abandoned house in Baghdad's Jamia district, May 8, 2008. (Oleg Popov/Reuters)

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WAR**

The New Issue Of Traveling Soldier Is Out!



U.S. Army soldier, Arab Jabour, south of Baghdad, Feb. 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

This issue features:

1. **“My squad and I are all behind IVAW 100%. ... This war is bullshit”**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/8.08.bull.php>
2. **“I choose to commemorate July Fourth by recommitting myself to living by the ideals which were blazed that day” says Iraq vet Sergeant Selena Coppa**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/8.08.4th.php>
3. **“We Must, As A Nation, Once Again, Embrace Defiance, Rebellion, And Resistance!” says Iraq vet Adam Kokesh.**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/8.08.kokesh.php>
4. **Download the new Traveling Soldier to pass it out at your school, workplace, or at nearby base.** <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/TS19.pdf>

While Soldiers Die:

**War Profiteers Getting 20% Of Total
Spent On Iraq War;
\$100 Billion, So Far**

August 12, 2008 By James Risen, The International Herald Tribune [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON: The United States this year will have spent \$100 billion on contractors in Iraq since the invasion in 2003, a milestone that reflects the Bush administration's unprecedented level of dependence on private firms for help in the war, according to a government report to be released Tuesday.

The report, by the Congressional Budget Office, according to people with knowledge of its contents, will say that one out of every five dollars spent on the war in Iraq has gone to contractors for the United States military and other government agencies, in a war zone where employees of private contractors now outnumber American troops.

The Pentagon's reliance on outside contractors in Iraq is proportionately far larger than in any previous conflict, and it has fueled charges that this outsourcing has led to overbilling, fraud and shoddy and unsafe work that has endangered and even killed American troops.

Dina Rasor, an author and independent expert on contracting fraud, said she believed that the \$100 billion cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office might be low, since there were virtually no reliable audits of or controls on spending during the first years of the war. "It is a shocking number, but I still don't think it is the full cost," Rasor said. "I don't think there have been any credible cost numbers for the Iraq war. There was so much money spent at the beginning of the war, and nobody knows where it went."

No, This Is Not A Satire; Army Handed Out \$2.8 Billion In Cash To Assorted Iraqis; "\$100,000 For Dolls; And \$500,000 For Action Figures Designed To Look Like Iraqi Security Forces"

Aug 11, 2008 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — An Army program in which soldiers pay cash to Iraqis to help with expenses has spent \$2.8 billion in five years, The Washington Post reported Monday.

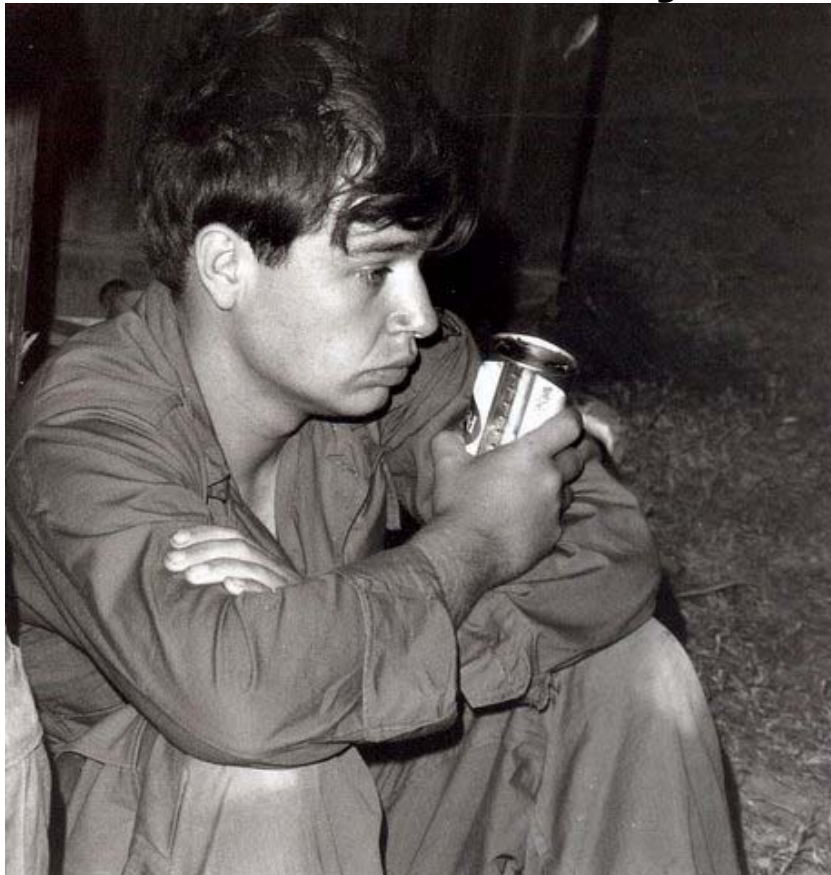
The Post reviewed records of the Commander's Emergency Response Program, which was intended for short-term humanitarian relief and reconstruction.

But the Army also spent lesser sums on smaller acts of largesse, including \$48,000 for children's shoes; \$50,000 for 625 sheep; \$100,000 for dolls; and \$500,000 for action figures designed to look like Iraqi security forces, the Post reported.

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. Frederick Douglas, 1852

The Lies of Betrayal



Army medic, An Khe, Vietnam 1971

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: August 16, 2008
Subject: The Lies of Betrayal

The Lies of Betrayal

You can't even begin to embrace the language of "Welcome Home," until you have first dealt with the lies of betrayal. Lying is the most powerful weapon in war. Betrayal is like a bounty hunter, always waiting like an ambush.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
August 16, 2008

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)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Confronting The Democratic National Convention: “Farmers In Kansas Aren’t Keeping The War Going. Democratic Votes In Congress Are”

**“We’re Tired Of The War And People
We Know Are Getting Killed”**

**“The Time Has Come For A Conscious,
Fundamental Break With The Practice Of
Political Subservience To The
Democratic Party”**

August 8, 2008 By Christian Wright, Alliance for Real Democracy, Denver, Colo.;
Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

My reasons for protesting the Democratic National Convention, which are also the generally shared reasons why most in ARD are protesting, are to call this party to account for its record and to make sure that progressive, and specifically antiwar politics, are heard loud and clear.

In every election, all of us are told to vote Democrat because of how much worse Republicans are. It’s as basic and ingrained as the colors of a stoplight.

Whether it’s done with bright eyes and high hopes, or with gritted teeth and muttered cynicism, almost the entire American left accepts the logic to some extent: If we want to end the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, if we want environmental justice, if we want to challenge the racist criminal justice system, if we want to support immigrant rights, if we want equality for the LGBT community, if we want to truly support a woman’s right to choose, and if we want to build real progressive social movements in the United States, then, we’re told, the first step is to get Democratic politicians into office.

The problem today with this argument is that Democrats have had a majority in Congress since the 2006 elections.

Since then, they have taken an overwhelmingly antiwar, anti-Bush mandate, and used it to:

--Pass “non-binding” resolutions expressing “disagreement” with the Iraq war, while simultaneously voting for hundreds of billions more in funding for it.

--Join Republicans to gut civil liberties and allow the government to spy on anyone, at any time, without a warrant.

On broader social justice issues, the record is just as lukewarm.

--Abortion remains unavailable in most counties in the United States and access to it continues to be restricted.

--Education today is more racially segregated and unequally funded than it was decades ago, and college itself is increasingly unaffordable.

--While productive industries crumble into recession and outsourcing, there is a “bipartisan” consensus on the need to expand both prison construction as well as military recruitment in schools.

Voting Democratic hasn’t brought the rosy results that were promised.

A lot of hopes were raised as the returns came in two Novembers ago, and what has (or more importantly, what hasn’t) happened since then has significantly changed the political landscape.

There is no more post-2004 “awe” of mythical “red state” domination.

Farmers in Kansas aren’t keeping the war going. Democratic votes in Congress are.

The period of “wait and see” has come pattering to its inevitable end, and the leadership of the Democratic Party has failed to live up to the mandate of its voters.

Even Barack Obama, whose early opposition to the war and community organizing background inspired many liberals to support him in the primaries, has lately lurched rightward on a wide range of issues (much to the concern of those to whom he owes his victory).

Tragically, many social movements have tended to demobilize in election years.

For the antiwar movement, this was quite obvious in 2004, happened again in 2006, and is going on this year as well.

The political effects of this have been to leave the movement, and most antiwar activists, confused, disorganized, demoralized and unsure of how to proceed.

[T]he Democratic Party has decided that possibly sending some troops home within 18 months is really the same thing as ending a war.

The time has come for a conscious, fundamental break with the practice of political subservience to the Democratic Party.

If Democrats know they have our votes in their pocket without having to even promise us anything, they're going to be spending their time making promises to everyone else to get their votes too. The result is a political establishment that lurches ever rightward. The voices of the left, minorities, women, immigrants, veterans, students and pretty much anyone else who isn't independently wealthy or politically connected, are left out in the cold.

These are the costly lessons of recent experience.

They teach us that unless we organize our own communities, keep our movements politically independent and actively pressure all politicians--whatever their party affiliation--no progressive agenda will be moving forward any time soon.

THE ALLIANCE for Real Democracy is a coalition representing some of the most powerful voices from Colorado and the nation.

Member groups include Iraq Veterans Against the War, Code Pink, United for Peace and Justice, Veterans for Peace, the Colorado Green Party, Students for a Democratic Society, Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, the International Socialist Organization, Progressive Democrats of America, Jobs with Justice and many others.

But more importantly than what we accomplish at the DNC, ARD is a model.

The fact that it can even exist, bringing together such diverse constituencies, is an imposing testament to just how deep the credibility gap of the Democrats has become.

But it is also an inspirational formation to be a part of.

For example, its members not only tolerate--but welcome--debates on our attitude to the Democratic Party. I don't think I've ever been in a meeting where members of PDA, the Greens, anarchists and third-party socialists are all working collaboratively on something, and where there is (in spite of media and police-induced paranoia) such a general level of goodwill among people of diverse ideological backgrounds.

In my opinion, ARD's positive organizational environment is a direct result of the seriousness with which its members take their work.

We are a nonpartisan organization.

None of us are in ARD because we like long, endless meetings, or haggling with a wary city over permit details, or because we enjoy insurmountable fundraising challenges.

There's certainly not a lot of NGO-political career advancement out there for people who are really good at protesting the Democrats!

I think ARD exists for the simple fact that we're tired of the war and people we know are getting killed.

We're tired of watching what we were taught was the freest nation in the world descend into a national security state--where the government is above the people, and no one knows if anything they write or say is private anymore.

We're tired of seeing racism and ignorance become acceptable.

I remember in 1999 after the Columbine shootings when the whole country was up in arms about the need to get counseling to the weird kids before they get so frustrated they try to resolve their problems with violence (I myself was sent by my school for such counseling). Today military recruiters are more often seen than college recruiters by a lot of kids. At least one Colorado high school has an Apache Helicopter mounted proudly on its front lawn. I can't think of a more fitting irony, or tragic confession, of just how upside down our country has become.

It's time to take it back.

People's lives are more important than any election, or any politician's career.

We're going to speak truth to power this August and judge the actions of all politicians by the same, "non-partisan" standards.

We hope you'll join us.

MORE:

[The lies of betrayal, Part 2:]

[Just in case you missed it the first time:]

**Another Rat Joins The Pack:
Nader Hangs With McCain And
Obama, Announcing His Very Own
Witless Plan To Kill More U.S.
Troops And Iraqis:
He's Against Bringing The Troops
Home For Another Year;**

Why Keep On Killing U.S. Troops And Iraqis? “That’s The Way You Knock The Bottom Out Of The Insurgency”

[So, if he were elected, no bringing the troops home for six months after his inauguration: July 2009. Campaigning for Nader is nothing but campaigning for more dead U.S. troops and more dead Iraqis. Nothing new about that. In 2004, he was yammering the same empty bullshit about wiping out the Iraqi insurgency. Of course, neither he nor his campaign organizers are willing to go to Iraq and take on that odious Imperial job themselves. T]

June 18, 2008 Interview with Democracy Now [Excerpts]

RALPH NADER: Six-month corporate and military withdrawal from Iraq, during which we negotiate with the Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis for modest autonomy, which they worked out in the 1950s before the dictators took over.

That’s the way you knock the bottom out of the insurgency.

Troops Invited:

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to 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. Phone: 917.677.8057

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

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