

## GI SPECIAL 616:

**BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG:  
COME ON HOME, NOW**



[Thanks to Name-Withheld-For-Obvious-Reasons]

**“Vets And Active Duty  
Soldiers Are Not In  
Support Of The War  
Anymore”**

**“We’re Not Fighting For  
Freedom”**

**“We’re Taking Other People’s  
Freedom”**



Iraq Veterans Against The War March On Republican Convention [Photo: IVAW.ORG]

September 6, 2008 By Liliana Segura, AlterNet [Excerpts]

When retired Army First Sergeant Wes Davey arrived, in uniform, at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul to deliver a letter to fellow veteran John McCain, it didn't take long for him to be turned away.

Davey had come to the site of the RNC along with 60 fellow members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, who marched in formation, chanting cadences and leading hundreds of peaceful fellow protesters, including members of Veterans for Peace, Gold Star Families for Peace, and others who came to stand in solidarity with the veterans.

IVAW members seemed unfazed at McCain's snub that morning. "I was really delighted to hear that the police went and escorted (Davey) out," former Marine Sgt. Liam Madden smiled wryly, "He was either going to get arrested or he was going to be escorted."

"I'm not surprised that McCain is not responding," said Rebecca Hansen, an IVAW member from Madison, Wisconsin. " ... "I don't think (Republicans) want the American people to know that vets and active duty soldiers are not in support of the war anymore."

As for Davey, a 28-year veteran with a child who has served two tours of duty in Iraq, he shrugged. "It looks bad on them, not on us."

Sitting on the Capitol steps after the march, Rebecca Hansen, who served as a specialist from 1995 to 2004 but never deployed, explained the primary reason she was in St. Paul.

"Basically because I've seen a lot of my friends come home that aren't getting their needs met ... It's just gotten to the point where some people are so frustrated, it's impairing their life. They can't lead a normal life."

For many, the frustration compounds a sense of betrayal from realizing that the war in Iraq was waged on false pretenses.

“It’s not the war that they told us we’d be fighting,” says Hansen. “We’re not fighting for freedom. We’re taking other people’s freedom.”

MORE:

**These Are Our Troops, Marching  
For Us All, Civilian And Military  
Alike, Proudly, Needing No Officer  
Corps To Command Them, In  
Perfect Order And Discipline, And  
Yes, We Love That Military, Our  
Own Military, Our Brothers And  
Sisters, Yes, 100%, 24/7**



Iraq Veterans Against The War, Denver [[www.ivaw.org/](http://www.ivaw.org/)]





Members of Iraq Veterans Against The War (IVAW) march in downtown Denver, leading several thousands activists following behind the banner :”Support GI Resistance” towards The Pepsi Center. (Photo: Rocky Mountain News)



Protesters following from the Denver Coliseum to the Pepsi Center. Tim Hussin: The Rocky Mountain News

Comment: T

Some civilians may question whether “the marching in formation” “seems to show some kind of support for the military in that context, as well as the empire,” as one commented in an email about the photos above.

These are our troops, marching for us all, civilian and military alike, proudly, needing no officer corps to command them, in perfect order and discipline, and yes, we love that military, our own military, our brothers and sisters, yes, 100%, 24/7.

The problem isn't that they march in good order, a magnificent inspiration to every man and women in the armed forces opposed to Imperial wars who see these photos.

The problem is that there are not yet a thousand, and ten thousands, and fifty thousands marching in perfect order and discipline against the enemy, along with battalions of active duty.

Yes, close order and discipline are absolutely necessary to any movement that is to have the slightest prospect of success.

Yes, if we can encourage and support a movement like this leading us towards the key military bases in the country next year, we would want nothing less than perfect order and discipline, and these men and women can deliver it.

These are the most magnificent, and hopeful, and wonderful photographs of the movement against the wars, so far.

Someday these photos will be in history books, and people will wonder at them, and reflect on what changes and better days coming they signified.

All honor and limitless respect to those who marched in Denver that day, each and every one.

Everybody in the armed services can feel pride in and identify with them.

They were opening a door to our future.

#### **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](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org): Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057**

## **ACTION REPORTS**

# **Hawaiian Fourth Of July: “Walking Along The Route To Find A Good Public Place To Set Up, We Got A Good Share Of Disapproving Stares, But Lots Of Thumbs Up And The Locally Popular ‘Shaka’”**



07/11/2008 By Logan M. Laituri [Iraq Veterans Against the War]

Branch of service: United States Army (USA)

Unit: 2nd Bn. 35th INF, 25th ID

Rank: SGT

Home: Honolulu, Hawaii

Served in: North Carolina, Hawaii, Iraq: Kirkuk, Mosul, Najaf, Sammarah, Tal Afar, Hawijah, Tuz Kharmatu... then I stopped keeping track.

I am for justice and stability in Iraq, and that is not possible as long as we enforce democracy at the end of a rifle.

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**Tracey and I (a veto majority of our little fledgling Honolulu Chapter) had made plans to attend the popular 4th of July celebration at the Marine Corps Base just down the road from our new home in Kailua, HI.**

Supporters from the AFSC regional office and US Labor Against War were eager to help with whatever they could.

**Though time consuming, our planned action was very simple: create a presence for IVAW in the local fanfare and festivities. All we did was walk around in IVAW member and supporter shirts and have fun!**

The idea came to me when I realized the relevancy of the beautifully designed “We the People” supporter tee shirts to this particular holiday. Emblazoned with Constitutional calligraphy, they are very effective in linking the oath we both took and the birth of our nation with the activities of IVAW.

Late last week, I got it in my head to get ahold of as many pocket sized constitutions as I could in preparation for the weekend, and my local Congressperson was more than happy to supply me with all I could hope for (I walked away with over 1,000 copies).

After taking about an hour on Thursday to slap some labels on the inside cover of each, with local contact info, we were ready to hit the streets.

**Our first ‘action’ was at the island’s only parade for the 4th, whose route snaked directly along our street.**

**We were armed with our chapter’s IVAW banner, plenty of Constitutions, and some SIT-REPs and other informational material.**



**Walking along the route to find a good public place to set up, we got a good share of disapproving stares, but lots of thumbs up and the locally popular ‘shaka.’**

**After we had set up, one family picked up and walked off, after shaking their heads disapprovingly.**

**The mother, however, returned and explained their son was due to deploy in a month, taking a copy of everything we could provide her with and promising to be in touch. Our first victory.**

A pleasant surprise came when the same Congressperson who (unwittingly) supplied me with the Constitutions passed by our little stand, staring at our banner as though he had just caught a glimpse of gold flakes in the streams of California. Finally, after a long moment (perhaps trying to figure out if we were real), he shot us a loud and boisterous "Thank you, we need more of you guys!" I'll be following up with him this week.

Lots of uniformed troops passed our little group (the two of us and one supporter), including a Marine Band and the local National Guard Unit and way too many church groups with an ungodly amount of American flags taped to their floats.

**We stayed stationary, but got a lot of folks that doubled back after their float had reached the end to collect info and question our motives.**

**Walking along the route, I had also found the Marshall Stand and supplied the judges with their own personal copies, "courtesy of Iraq Veterans Against the War."**

**The two Marine Commanding Generals were forced to take them publicly or look un-patriotic on the most hyped patriotic day of the year. Victory Two.**

Later that day, we went up to my old stomping grounds at Schofield Barracks, where none other than Billy Ray Cyrus was to perform (thankfully, he didn't achy-breaky my eardrums).

Due to our compatriots escapades at Ft. Bragg earlier this year, Tracey and I took it very cautiously, as she is still a drilling reservist and could potentially get detained for 'distributing restricted material.'

**She stuck to the Constitutions, and we both prayed we could get arrested and hear that the Constitution constituted restricted material. Think of the statement that could make....**

On our way to the car (exhaustion mostly), we toyed with the idea of leaving materials underneath windshield wipers.

**We figured it would be better than all the advertisements I was used to getting while I lived in the barracks, so we went ahead and dropped 10 of my IVAW business cards underneath wiper blades (we had close parking, surprisingly).**

We left Schofield happy for the confused looks and stern glances we caught, but disappointed with how few soldiers we were able to connect with.

Not far down the road, I got a call from an out of state number and immediately regretted leaving my contact info.



The guy on the other line was none-too-happy that I left materials on his personal property and was politely inquiring as to where he might meet me in order to break my arm.

Always the people pleaser, I asked if he had heard of IVAW and what he thought of the organization.

Not interested in small talk, he again insisted he be given the opportunity to break my arm.

**He also suggested that I was not personally familiar with the conflicts in the Middle East, after which I illuminated the fact that my unit had seen more real estate in Iraq than most other units to date.**

**Before he could choke on his own shoelaces, I reminded him of the process by which he could simply dispose of the material by way of a nearby trashcan, and that the organization that I represent, and the institution he is currently employed by, requires the intestinal fortitude of THINKING men and women, and that, judging by his clarity of thought (or lack thereof), the nation would be best served if he separate from the military and ensure that the wars of our day be fought exclusively by informed, intelligent, and patriotic service members, not blindly obedient pawns who outsource their cognitive abilities to the likes of Bill O'Reilly and News Corp.**

I did not provide him the opportunity to respond.

On Saturday, four of us attended a festival on the Marine Corps base nearby, but it was similarly low-key. Two AFSC members tagged along and had some carnie food and went on some rides with Tracey and me.

We definitely had some fun; the goal of the action was not outreach, but raising awareness, getting IVAW's name to folks and letting them know we're here and we mean business. None of us wanted to disrupt the festive atmosphere, but we did want to take advantage of the significance of the event.

We had some conversations with a couple uniformed Marines manning the equipment on display, as well as handed out Constitutions to many guys in uniform, but the conversations were pretty lacking.

One guy actually refused the Constitution when he saw our shirts, saying he was 'of another perspective.' I am guessing here, but could he have been of the perspective that is somehow at ease with the over 4,000 dead, the despicable managing of taxpayer funds and complete lack of oversight and accountability and who are happy to return time and again with inadequate care after separation?

This is one issue I am happy to be well on the bandwagon for.

**I reminded him that the men that wrote our Constitution would be appalled by that perspective and that when he was in a position to take his Oath of Enlistment more seriously, IVAW would be happy to welcome him into our ranks.**

## **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**

## **IRAQ WAR REPORTS**

### **Family, Friends Remember Former Arab High Student Killed In Iraq**

September 6, 2008 The Associated Press

An Army soldier who grew up in north Alabama and was killed by a sniper in Iraq was remembered by family and friends as fun-loving and always with a smile on his face.

Spec. Steven J. Fitzmorris, 26, died Aug. 25. He moved to north Alabama as a child and attended Arab High School.

His funeral was Tuesday in Columbia, Mo., where he lived with his wife, Samantha, and their two young children, Joshua and Mykenzee.

"Anyone who remembers him would remember him as a chatterbox and a clown," his mother, Rosemarie Fitzmorris-Currier of Salem, told The Arab Tribune.

"And cute," said his grandmother, Louise Fitzmorris of Arab.

Family members said he spent half of his life in Arab, where as a child he was an altar server at St. William Catholic Church in Guntersville. He played pee wee football, was on a local swim team and enjoyed in-line skating.

"He was happy-go-lucky," said former principal Edwin Cooley. "Energetic. He would get into some things, but I can remember him smiling a lot. This child took his punishment with a smile and went on."

Fitzmorris, who earned his GED, joined the Army in January 2007 and was deployed to Iraq in December for an 18-month mission.

He was on a combat mission Aug. 25 in a small neighborhood in Baghdad when he was hit by sniper fire, Army spokeswoman Brandy Gill told The Huntsville Times for a story

published Friday. He died three hours later, Gill said. An E-4, Fitzmorris served in A Battery, 329th Field Artillery, stationed in Fort Carson, Colo.

“He was a good boy who just wanted to serve his country,” his grandmother said.

In the short time he was with the Army, he received the Army Commendation Award, an Iraq Campaign medal with a bronze star and several other awards, Gill said.

His mother said she had communicated with her son by instant messenger in recent months.

“Don’t worry about me,” he would often type. “I’m bulletproof.”

He often forgot the time difference and called home at odd hours, she said. His last call came at 11:30 p.m. Aug. 23 her time. They spoke for almost an hour.

“The last thing I said to him, it’s what I always say, ‘I love you. Take care. Wear your helmet. Wear your body armor.’”

“I love you, Mom,” he replied. “And I will take care.”

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## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

**Pissed-Off Pakistani Government  
Cuts Off Fuel Supplies For Afghan  
Occupation Army At Torkham  
Crossing;  
U.S. Imperial Idiots In Command Pay  
The Price For Sending Troops To  
Attack Pakistan Last Week;  
“We Have Stopped The Supply Of Oil  
And This Will Tell How Serious We Are”**

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

September 06, 2008 Reuters

Peshawar: Pakistan blocked a major fuel supply route for Western forces in Afghanistan yesterday in response to a raid by US forces into northwest Pakistan last week, the defence minister said.

US commandos attacked inside Pakistani territory on Wednesday, killing 20 people including women and children, Pakistani officials said, and drawing a furious response from the Pakistani government.

“We have told them that we will take action and we have already taken action today. We have stopped the supply of oil and this will tell how serious we are,” said Defence Minister Chaudhry Ahmad Mukhtar on Dawn Television.

Fuel supplies have been blocked from crossing through the main crossing point at Torkham on the Pakistani-Afghan border near Peshawar, capital of the North West Frontier Province.

**The decision to block fuel crossing the border at Torkham illustrates just how vulnerable supplies for US and other foreign forces in Afghanistan are.**

**Most fuel and other supplies for US forces in Afghanistan are trucked through Pakistan, crossing the border at two points: Torkham and Chaman, to the southwest.**

**The Chaman crossing, where supplies bound for foreign forces in the Afghan south, particularly Kandahar, pass in from Pakistan, was operating normally on Saturday.**

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## **S.A. Native Killed In Attack In Afghanistan: [A News Story Written With Brilliance And Heart]**



Army Sgt. 1st Class David J. Todd Jr., 36, had also served in Iraq.

08/26/2008 Scott Huddleston, Express-News

Mary Todd can't shake the memory of her son's last e-mail from Afghanistan.

"Mom, this is going to be a long one," Army Sgt. 1st Class David J. Todd Jr. wrote early this month.

Expecting his mission to last 10 to 12 days, he told her to keep checking on his wife, knowing she'd worry about not hearing from him. His mother sensed that he might not return to see his wife and five children.

"It's almost like he was saying goodbye," she said, her voice breaking.

Her son, 36, died Wednesday after being hit by small-arms fire when his unit was attacked in Bala Morghab, according to the Defense Department.

His death comes amid increasing dangers in Afghanistan. While San Antonio hasn't had a combat-related death in Iraq in 2008, Todd's is this year's second known battle death of a San Antonian there. Marine Sgt. Matthew Mendoza was killed by an explosive June 20 in Helmand province.

As her son served in the first phase of the war in Iraq, Mary Todd attended meetings of a support group for mothers of deployed troops.

"We feel like that old beetle that finds himself upside down, waving its legs and feeling helpless," she told the San Antonio Express-News in August 2003, explaining the mothers' anxiety.

Since then, while Iraq has absorbed the public's attention, her son, who also served in Kuwait during Desert Storm, avoided being called back to Iraq.

But Afghanistan was a "different animal," his mother said.

Both wars made him nervous.

"He looked a little more worried" while preparing for Afghanistan, she said.

Though he recently lived in the New Orleans suburb of Marrero and worked as an ROTC instructor at Tulane University, Todd was proud of his San Antonio roots. He often wore a cowboy hat and boots.

He'd also worn Army colors since he was a boy, when his mother bought him fatigues at an Army surplus store. His father, David Todd Sr., served with the Air Force in Vietnam. His mother said that over time, Todd believed in sacrificing to make life better for others.

"It's better to let 10 soldiers die than 1,000 innocent people," he'd tell his teenage son, according to his mother.



He was the 101st U.S. service member killed this year in Afghanistan, where deaths are on pace to exceed last year's record toll of 111, according to the Associated Press.

June was the second-deadliest month in Afghanistan since the war began in 2001, with 23 deaths, surpassing 22 in Iraq that same month.

Chris Peche, who founded a local chapter of Blue Star Mothers of America in 2003, said her members no longer view Afghanistan as "the good war."

"They realize what the news has reported, that Afghanistan is now more prone to violence," Peche said.

Todd, a San Antonio native, grew up on the Northeast Side and attended MacArthur High School. As an adult, he put his children at the center of his life, calling them "little gifts" from God, his mother said. He'd take them fishing or boating, or to Mardi Gras.

After Hurricane Katrina damaged the New Orleans area's schools, he sent two of his children, Kandace Todd, now 18, and David S. Todd, now 16, to live with his parents in St. Hedwig so they could attend East Central High School. His other three children, 15, 12 and 2, live with his wife, Tianne, in Louisiana.

Mary Todd used to sit in the heat and imagine her son enduring Iraq's triple-digit temperatures so she could feel close to him.

After he went to Afghanistan in December, she sent him a soft sleeping bag and hand warmers to get him through the winter. He was a reconnaissance scout at the Afghan Regional Security Integration Command-West in Herat.

Keeping in touch by phone, e-mail or instant message, Todd and his mother exchanged spiritual advice. She told him to read Psalm 23, often read at funerals. He preferred Psalm 27, which says to "be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart."

She feels that psalm best describes her son.

Todd also is survived by a sister, Stephanie Marie Keller of Aurora, Colo.

A funeral is planned Saturday in New Orleans, under the direction of Jacob Schoen & Son Funeral Home. Locally, a memorial service is set for 5:30 p.m. Sept. 6 at Cross of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Universal City.

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## **“He Wanted To See The World And Do Some Good” Slain Ramsey Soldier ‘Was So Close’ To Finishing Service**



Brian Studer: Family Handout, Star Tribune

By MARY LYNN SMITH and PAUL WALSH, Star Tribune

Staff Sgt. Brian Studer was mere months away from leaving Afghanistan and the Army, with plans to return to Minnesota.

But Studer, 28, of Ramsey was killed Friday trying to disarm an explosive device in Ghazni Province.

Studer, who had been in the Army nine years, expected to leave Afghanistan in two months and finish his last couple of months of service in Germany, said his brother, Philip Studer. He served with an explosive ordnance disposal company based in Germany, the Army said.

"It was so close," Philip Studer said. "He was almost done. He was ready to get out."

Brian Studer grew up in Ramsey and graduated from Elk River High School in 1999, his brother said. "He was a good kid. Quiet. Smart. Kept to himself." He took college classes his last two years of high school, Philip Studer said. After graduating from high school, he had the opportunity to go to college. "But he chose to go into the Army," Philip Studer said.

"He wanted to see the world and do some good."

The Army transformed the kid who used to stay in his room all day and work on his computer, his brother said. "He stood straighter. He was more assertive. He was more talkative," Philip Studer said. While in the Army, he was assigned to Germany, South Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Philip Studer said his brother planned to use his military experience by joining HALO Trust, a nonpolitical, nongovernmental organization that specializes in removal of war debris, including mines.**

“He wanted to use his experience in a nonmilitary way,” Studer said. “He downplayed the danger and always reassured us.”

**Brian Studer’s death brings to at least 74 the number of people with strong Minnesota ties who have died in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Studer is the fifth with Minnesota connections killed in Afghanistan.**

Besides his brother, Philip, Brian Studer is survived by his mother, Ellen Hanson of Ramsey; his father, Gene Studer of Rose Creek, Minn.; two sisters, Crystal Studer and Chelle Hanson, both of Ramsey; and his maternal grandparents, Bernice and Bill Carpenter of Asutin, Minn.

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## TROOP NEWS

### Why Wait?

**“The Only Thing Going On Right Now  
Is Those Who Do Not Want Us There  
Are Busy Planning New Ways Of  
Killing US Troops (Latest Idea, Lob-  
Bombs) And Waiting For A Good  
Opportunity To Strike”  
“PULL OUT WHILE THE RISK IS LOW!”**



07/29/2008 By Reagan Sullivan [Iraq Veterans Against the War] [Excerpts]

Branch: United States Army (USA)

Home: New Mexico

3 years in the ARNG, 3 years active duty. Spent one year in Iraq (OIF1).

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**So far only 11 confirmed US troop deaths for the month of July 2008. I wonder now, why the sudden halt in the numbers of deaths?**

Could it be that more Iraqi's are being paid to not attack US troops? Has there been a complete halt of operations outside of bases?

Are the "insurgents" laying low for a while?

Did the surge really work?

I cannot answer these questions, but all of them are debatable.

**Violence is still present, and there are still US troops reported as being wounded according to [www.icasualties.org](http://www.icasualties.org) with over half of them returning to duty.**

(According to the site 153 have been wounded and returned to duty within 72 hours, and 73 wounded and did not return to duty within 72 hours) although I do not know of an accurate source of wounded troops, this article may help explain why <http://fairuse.100webcustomers.com/fairenough/courier00.html>

So icasualties.org may be as accurate as any reporting on wounded and injured troops.

Lately I have only read about Iraqi's being killed by Iraqi's or other militants of middle eastern descent. Which occurs in almost every Arab/Muslim/Middle Eastern country from time to time.

**But one thought I can't get out of my head is what is up with the number of wounded being reported?**

**Has there been a spike in indirect fire incidents, and have these attacks not been as effective lately? Or has there simply been a ton of non-combat related injuries?**

Aside from that, I can focus on the low numbers of troop deaths this month.

Maybe it is a sign that it is a good time to get out of Iraq and let the Iraqi government take care of their own.

**No point in our troops being used to prevent attacks on the civilian population, that is why we spent the last 5 years training the Iraqi army!**

**Funny, by now half of Iraq should be in the army.**

My point is, they can take over completely, and our troops can come home safe.

**The civilian contractors can stay if they want, but I am sure after our troops leave they won't like their job anymore.**

Seriously, why keep waiting to see how the surge turned out? this could be a win-win for both sides.

**McCain and his neo-spawns can take credit for the "success" of the surge and feel like we won the war (what is the prize anyway?) and for those of us opposed to the occupation can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that all the troops are out (Hopefully not going straight to Afghanistan either).**

Why wait?

The only thing going on right now is those who do not want us there are busy planning new ways of killing US troops (Latest idea, Lob-Bombs) and waiting for a good opportunity to strike.

**PULL OUT WHILE THE RISK IS LOW!**

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## **Freaky Admiral In Command At Guantanamo Tells Press His Wife, Kids Can Watch People Masturbating, Having Sex With Each Other, And Going To Toilet**

9.5.08 San Diego Union-Tribune [Excerpt]

From: Interview with Rear Adm. David M. Thomas Jr., commander of the Joint Task Force at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Q. There are arguments that the Pentagon hasn't pushed back as much as it should against the notion that Abu Ghraib is the norm rather than something that was a horrible but brief period.

**A. [Thomas]: I can't tell you what I don't know, and I don't know. I can tell you there's nothing that goes on at Guantanamo that I would be embarrassed or ashamed to show my mom or my kids.**

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**FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**



# **The Evil Of The Lesser Evil: “Only A Profound Ignorance Of History And Its Lessons About The Mechanics Of Change Can Sustain The Lesser Evil Argument” “Change From Below Is The Only Change We Can Believe In”**

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

**Regardless of what Obama does, liberals will whine and cry when they discover that the wolf in sheep's clothing they befriended is intent on devouring all that they hold dear.**

9.2.08 By Pham Binh, Monthly Review.

Pham Binh is on the editorial board of Traveling Soldier.

His articles have been published at Counterpunch, Asia Times Online, International Socialist Review, and ZNet. His blog is prisonerofstarvation.blogspot.com and he can be reached at <anita\_job@yahoo.com>

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**With the regularity that even Old Faithful can't match, the American Left dragoons itself into supporting the Democrats every election cycle, no matter what office is up for grabs, no matter what the candidate's message, and no matter what their record.**

**2008 is no different.**

**For this ritual, progressives, liberals, unions, civil rights organizations, and even self-described revolutionaries scramble to come up with reasons why we should vote for the party that got the U.S. into most of its imperialist wars, nuked Japan twice, opposed and tried to co-opt the civil rights movement, repealed welfare, gave us NAFTA and the WTO, deregulated the financial sector (paving the way for our current economic debacle), refused to deliver universal health care for over half a century, gave away our civil liberties, and continues to this day to fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.**

Progressives who want real, substantial change find themselves apologizing and making excuses for Obama's sprint to the right after clinching his party's nomination. Some, including historian Howard Zinn, have signed an open letter begging him to take more progressive positions.

Apparently they see his move to the right as a simple mistake and not a calculated move designed to reassure the corporations funding his campaign that he's their kind of guy.

Progressives who support him claim he's just pandering to "swing voters," that he spoke in favor of an undivided Israeli Jerusalem because he "had to," that his vote to give telecom companies retroactive immunity has nothing to do with the fact that they've given tons of cash to his campaign, and so on and so forth ad infinitum.

**Despite the hand-wringing, whining, and anger at Obama from progressives, on election day all of them will pull the lever for Corporate America's favorite son.**

Once again, progressives will vote for a candidate who is structurally incapable of advancing a single item on their agenda and in spite of the fact that he didn't even bother to pander to them.

His refusal to pander to his "friends on the Left" speaks volumes about irrelevance of those "friends on the Left" and highlights their failure to move the Democratic Party in a progressive direction.

**Most leftists, or at least those who aren't willfully blind Obama groupies, will concede that Obama isn't perfect. But they'll still vote for him because they believe, fundamentally, that the Democrats are "the lesser of two evils." Tweedledee (D) is always and will always be "less bad" than Tweedledum (R) because he/she has the letter D next to his name.**

**Only a profound ignorance of history and its lessons about the mechanics of change can sustain the lesser evil argument.**

### **The Fire Last Time**

The last time politics in the U.S. moved to the Left was during the heady days of the civil rights, Black Power, anti-war, environmental, gay rights, and women's liberation movements of "the 60s," a period that extended from 1955 until the mid 1970s.

Did these movements succeed because the Democrats were in office?

Was it easier to organize a movement because a Democrat was in the White House?

**Was it a Democrat who brought the troops home from Vietnam, ended the draft, lowered the voting age to 18, set up the Environmental Protection Agency, established the first federal affirmative action program, and set up the Occupational Health and Safety Organization?**

**No.**

### **It was Richard Nixon.**

No wonder why comedian Stephen Colbert called Nixon “the last liberal president.”

Just so that no one is confused, Nixon didn't do these things because he was secretly an anti-war anti-racist environment-loving hippie fronting as a right-wing anti-communist racist warmonger.

The fact of the matter is that protest movements became too powerful to be ignored, rebuffed, or repressed, although he certainly tried his best.

### **He had no choice but to make concessions.**

Refusing to implement reforms would have led to even more militancy at home and opened the possibility of a revolutionary situation in the U.S.

**(Given the rank-and-file troops' refusal to fight peasants in the jungles of 'Nam by the early 1970s, there was no guarantee they'd shoot their own people on the streets of America.)**

**Taking a hard line against the evils of reform and calling out the troops to suppress demonstrators didn't work so well for Tsar Nicholas II.**

**Nixon was crafty, paranoid, and manipulative, but he was not a fool.**

In 1973, the Supreme Court voted to legalize abortion in the historic Roe v. Wade decision, a reflection of the strength of the women's liberation movement.

At the time, the court had six Republican appointees on the bench. They weren't weathermen, but even they knew which way the wind was blowing.

So much for the Supreme Court argument of the Lesser Evil crowd.

### **Donkeys Can Do What Elephants Can't**

Due to the party's liberal veneer, there are some things that the Democrats can get away with the Republicans can't.

Ending welfare is a case in point.

Reagan fired the opening salvo in the Right's assault on welfare by citing a fictional “welfare queen” from Chicago who used 80 aliases, 30 addresses, a dozen social security cards, and four fictional dead husbands to rip off the federal government for a hefty sum of \$150,000. The woman Reagan referred to actually defrauded the government of \$8,000 and used only four aliases, but when did facts ever factor into the ideological agenda of the Right?

It was Bill Clinton, a Democrat, who fired the last shot in this fight, finishing what Reagan had started.

In 1996, Clinton abolished welfare and replaced it with a “temporary assistance” program that placed a five-year lifetime limit on benefits and other serious restrictions on those who received public assistance, including children. Predictably, a record number of black children fell into extreme poverty during the first recession after the bill was passed and the number of Americans in “deep poverty” is growing today.

Only a Democrat could have delivered this major strategic victory in the war on the poor because, as one Clinton official put it, “If Ronald Reagan was doing this, they’d be dragging poor kids up to the White House in wheelchairs to oppose this.”

But because there was a D next to Clinton’s name, there were no poor kids in wheelchairs in front of the White House, there was no protest. Instead, there was behind-the-scenes lobbying against the bill which failed miserably and a few liberals who resigned from the administration.

Ending welfare was an inside job.

Only towards the end of Clinton’s second term did opposition to his imperialist pro-corporate administration begin to develop, albeit tentatively.

Activists opposed to the sanctions on Iraq ripped Secretary of State Madeline “Mad Bomber” Albright, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, and National Security Advisor Sandy Berger live on national television at a town hall meeting at Ohio State University and broadcast by CNN.

The event was organized by the Clinton administration to drum up support for bombing Iraq in 1998 supposedly because Iraq’s evil murderous dictator Saddam Hussein -- a.k.a. “the New Hitler” -- refused to let weapons inspectors look for nonexistent WMD. (Hussein found out that CIA spies had infiltrated the UN’s weapon inspections teams to gather intelligence that would help the U.S. to assassinate him. Predictably, he kicked them out of the country.)

Instead of the heartland-loves-bombing-a-rabs dog and pony show they expected, Clinton’s team found articulate activists asking penetrating questions: Why did the U.S. have no problem supporting Turkish and Israeli genocide but blast Hussein for being genocidal?

Why was it OK to sell weapons to murderous Indonesia dictator Suharto but enforce a genocidal sanctions policy on Iraq which killed 1.5 million people? Once they were exposed as cold-blooded murdering hypocrites, Clinton’s foreign policy team turned defensive and lost the hearts and minds of the auditorium.

The whole thing was a huge embarrassment. (No wonder Obama doesn’t want to do town halls with McCain.)

**The PR disaster didn’t stop Clinton from signing the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, making “regime change” in Baghdad official U.S. policy, thereby paving the way for his successor to make that policy a reality under the same bogus pretext of WMD.**

**Bear in mind that Clinton killed 1.5 million Iraqis while Bush has killed an estimated 1.2 million. By the twisted logic of the body count, Bush is the lesser evil here.**

**Scary thought.**

In 1999, there was the Seattle protest against the WTO meeting which marked the birth of the global justice movement. There were big protests against the Confederate flag in the south. A pro-death penalty Republican governor in Illinois was forced to halt executions by an activist campaign.

This simmering discontent expressed itself in the electoral arena with Green Party candidate Ralph Nader's run in which he won a bigger slice of the electorate than any left candidate since the revolutionary socialist Eugene Debs in 1920.

### **Again, The Lesser Evil?**

**The neat thing about the lesser evil argument is that, like the argument about whether or not God exists, there is no way to design an experiment to prove it.**

No one has a time machine that could rewind us to 2000, give Al Gore the presidency, and see if he too would have invaded Iraq after Afghanistan. I strongly suspect he would have, given that "regime change" was official U.S. policy, given that the Clinton administration tried to assassinate Hussein in 1998 as part of that policy, given that Iraq was the weakest country on the American hit list, and given the enormous gain in geopolitical power the U.S. would enjoy by putting permanent bases over the world's second largest oil supply. But what Gore would do is debatable.

Similarly, no one has a machine that will take us into the future to see what both John McCain and Barack Obama will do, which is the only definitive way to answer the question of who really is the lesser evil.

**It should be said that, as a black Democrat, Obama will have a lot more credibility and public support if he decides to bomb Iran, start a draft, or end affirmative action the way Clinton ended welfare.**

**Regardless of what Obama does, liberals will whine and cry when they discover that the wolf in sheep's clothing they befriended is intent on devouring all that they hold dear.**

**They will say they are disappointed, upset, frustrated, and shocked by the gap between Obama's rhetoric on the campaign trail and his record in the White House.**

**After they're done blowing their noses and wiping away their tears, they will look at the calendar, see that it's 2012, and say, "Imagine if John McCain was president -- how much worse off we would be," and start the cycle all over again.**

**This ought to be in the Guinness Book of World Records under "world's longest-running abusive relationship."**



The point here is not that Obama is the greater evil, or that Obama and McCain will do exactly the same things, or that there will be absolutely no difference between them.

The point is that lesser-evilism as a progressive strategy has succeeded -- succeeded in making American politics progressively more and more right-wing, more and more "evil," if you will. It has succeeded in lowering people's expectations.

And it has helped put Nixon to the left of Clinton on domestic policy.

The lesser-evil, applied to Abu Ghraib or Gitmo, would be an interrogator informing a prisoner that they have a choice to either be water-boarded or have their genitalia electrocuted at high voltage.

After the first interrogation session, the voltage would be turned up and the time spent on water-boarding would be increased. The cycle would be repeated again, with a higher voltage and more time.

Choose again, the prisoner would be told. Eventually, the prisoner's spirit would be broken and would be delirious and desperate enough to believe one method was "less bad" than the other.

The only real choice here is organize a prison break.

**Whether or not 2008 is a change election depends not on what Obama does after he's sworn in but on what people do or don't do at the grassroots level.**

**Change from below is the only change we can believe in.**

**Choosing the so-called lesser evil only makes things worse.**

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

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE  
WARS**

**"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**

**"The military are the final, essential weak point of Bush and Cheney." David McReynolds 9.29.07**

# DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



## **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.org/](http://www.ivaw.org/))**

# **RECEIVED**

## **Lifeline Received**

From: Rev. C  
To: GI Special  
Sent: September 06, 2008  
Subject: thanks

Thanks so much for the outstanding work you do in putting out the G.I. Special day after day.

I frequently forward copies to friends around the country. Keep up the good work.

In solidarity,

Rev. C, pastor  
United Methodist Church

### **REPLY:**

Dear Rev. C,

Your help via Paypal and encouragement in this letter makes "Living God's Word, Sharing God's Love" real. There are a lot of people who make GI Special possible; this will be a real lift for their morale.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever,"

He got it right about slavery. We could use some more.

Solidarity,

T

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

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

# GI Special www.militaryproject.org

*This is how Bush brings the troops home,  
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.*



*GI Special is a near-daily news bulletin for service members  
www.militaryproject.org*

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