

GI SPECIAL GUARD ISSUE:

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**“We Cannot Allow Any
President To Shift Focus
To Afghanistan”**

**“The Work Of Building A Better
World Rests On Our Ability To
Assert Ourselves As The True
Architects Of Our Future”**

“This Is The Work Of The People, Not Of The Politicians”

“It Has Been Going On, It Continues, It Can Never Stop, Not For One Minute”



By Camilo Mejia, From Panel Discussion, Socialist Worker newspaper, 11.7.08

Camilo Mejía was the first active-duty soldier to go public with his decision to refuse redeployment to Iraq and is the chair of the board of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

During the final presidential debate at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y., members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) requested that moderator Bob Schieffer allow them to ask each candidate a question.

The question for Sen. McCain was about veterans' benefits since, being a war veteran and former POW himself, he should have a better voting record when it comes to veterans' well-being. The question for Sen. Obama, who voted against the invasion of Iraq and called the invasion illegal at one point, focused on whether he would be willing to support soldiers who wanted to become conscientious objectors.

Not only was IVAW not able to ask the questions, but we were attacked by the Hempstead mounted police. Ten of our members, along with some civilian activists, were arrested, and two of our members were injured, one suffering a broken cheekbone.

Neither candidate mentioned either Iraq or Afghanistan during the entire 90-minute debate.

The promise of a better nation, one whose resources are dedicated to improving social conditions and where wealth is distributed to lift up the working ranks of society, rings hollow when military veterans can't ask a question without being violently repressed.

All this is to say that regardless of who gets elected, the work of building a better world remains in the hands of the people and rests on our ability to assert ourselves as the true architects of our future.

Obama is regarded as the antiwar candidate for having voted against the invasion of Iraq and for promising a progressive withdrawal of troops from that country, and both he and McCain have spoken about the success of the troop "surge" in Iraq.

But to seriously address the situation in Iraq and the eventual withdrawal from it would require Obama to address the 180,000 private contractors in Iraq, the permanent military bases, and the diplomatic and corporate complex from which the U.S. government intends to run the country. And of course, the "success" of the surge fails to recognize that more than half of the population of Iraq is either displaced, in need of emergency aid or dead.

The "global war on terror," the name given by the past and now present administrations to justify profit-driven invasions and occupations, needs a new centerpiece.

The Iraq war has become too unpopular to continue justifying the U.S. imperial agenda.

We cannot allow any president to shift focus to Afghanistan in order to continue American warmongering.

President Obama has promised to continue pouring troops into that country and to see the war spill into Pakistan if he deems it necessary.

The antiwar movement has to realize the need to continue the struggle for peace and justice, a struggle that starts at home where, in opposing costly and illegal wars of aggression, we wage battles against poverty, racism and exploitation of the working class by the ruling elite.

Only by building a true grassroots movement to combat a corporate-controlled government will we be able to create a world where peace, justice and social equality can prevail.

This is the work of the people, not of the politicians, regardless of who is president.

It has been going on, it continues, it can never stop, not for one minute.

“This Is The Freedom We’re Fighting In Iraq For, Huh?”

[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent in this news story, with the headline.]

[And if you think that any of the powerful politicians in DC give a shit about what's being done to the citizens in this news story, you are out of your mind. The politicians in DC are bought and paid for by the same kind of people who make this Denver courtroom happen, and to them, we're merely an annoyance. Until we come calling on them in our millions.]

October 21, 2008 By Bill Johnson, Rocky Mountain News

As trials go, and I've sat through many, this wasn't much of one. It went pretty much like this:

Officer No. 1: I didn't actually see him break the law, but he was in a group of people the commander told me to arrest, so I did.

Officer No. 2: I didn't actually see her break the law, but she was in a group of people the commander told me to arrest, so I did.

City Attorney No. 1: Your honor, the prosecution rests.

If there is any justice still around, the four women and two men who make up the jury in Courtroom 282 of Denver County Court will this morning do what they often do on TV, tell Judge Kathleen Bowers that there is no need for deliberations, that they made up their minds, oh, three days ago: Not guilty.

I get what Denver is trying to do: If you have your police department corral, hose down with pepper spray and arrest more than 100 people in the middle of downtown during, of all things, the Democratic National Convention, you better darn well prosecute those who demand their day in court.

The problem it seems, as the first of the DNC trials got under way Monday, is that everyone who did the actual law-breaking likely has pleaded out already.

The scorecard thus far on the first five cases to reach Courtroom 282: three outright dismissals and two of the three charges against the remaining two defendants thrown out.

At the very least, if the jury was paying attention at all to the case I heard the prosecution put on Tuesday, the "not guilty" verdicts should be returned long before lunch today.

Eli Hardy and Tiffany Bray remain charged with obstructing a street or public passageway.

They were among the more than 100 people swept up by more than 100 police officers pursuing demonstrators in the early evening of Aug. 25 at 15th Street and Court Place.

They both maintain they were merely in the area at the time the protest march formed, wanted none of it, yet were prevented from leaving the area by the cordon thrown up by police.

Nothing the prosecution presented by the close of its case Tuesday proved otherwise.

Lonn Heymann and Qusair Mohamedbhai, attorneys for the two, looked at each other quite quizzically and for long moments when city attorneys told the judge they were resting their case.

“OK, who goes first?” I heard one of them say.

Lonn Heymann argued passionately that the charges should be dismissed immediately, even if the judge were to give the prosecution the best of things.

No one had seen Hardy or Bray do anything, much less testify to it.

He even said, “Are you kidding me?”

Assistant City Attorney Nate Fehrmann countered that the judge should at least let the jury decide. That officers had testified that members of the group with which Hardy and Bray were arrested had been seen, well, in the streets on that day.

You could tell the judge was torn. She took her time. She heard everyone out.

And in the end, Kathleen Bowers took the easiest and, perhaps, fairest route.

“Let’s let the jury decide,” she finally ruled.

Whatever the outcome, what I walked away with from Courtroom 282 could fill this newspaper.

The first thing is that being within spitting distance of any large crowd that is even remotely protesting anything means - and this truly is “anti-American” - arrest can happen virtually anytime.

Your day is ruined.

I will later tell the story of Tiffany Bray, of the fear and humiliation she endured on that summer day, an ordeal that even an acquittal today will never wash away.

Tiffany Bray was new in town and coming back from shopping when she was swept up and told by officers multiple times to just sit where she was standing, that if she did that, the officers would let her go home.

In her case, that was on the curb, her feet in the street.

Prosecutors on Tuesday tried to use that as proof she was blocking the street.

No matter what happens today to Eli Hardy and Tiffany Bray, the reality, too, is that more than 50 others like them are also due very shortly inside Courtroom 282.

It has taken three days now to adjudicate the two of them, a process that at minimum has involved a judge, her clerk, seven jurors, three to four city attorneys, three defense attorneys and a small forest of trees.

Numbers are not my friend, and I still cannot balance my checkbook, but even I know that is costing us - meaning you and me - a boatload of taxpayer cash.

Now multiply that number by at least 50.

And to what end?

It cannot be, not as I sit here, jailing and criminalizing Tiffany Bray and Eli Hardy.

Yet after hours spent in Courtroom 282, along with my personal road weariness, I must tell you that the system will say and do as it will.

And, in the end, quite sadly, it will do so on the flimsiest of proof.

Everything has lost its ability to surprise.



Meanwhile, Back In The Real World:

They're On The Receiving End Of Imperial Glory

[Comments on outcome of U.S. election, quoted by Leila Fadel and Corinne Reilly,
McClatchy Newspapers, November 5, 2008

**"We have seen nothing positive from any American president, and McCain and Obama
are two faces of one coin, one policy."**

**--Hameed Kamil Hilal, a 65-year-old retired government employee in the southern oil
hub of Basra.**

**"It doesn't really matter to me either way. It's not going to change anything for me
today, right?"**

-Sgt. 1st Class Oliver Wallace, Iraq.



U.S. soldier in Beijia village Iraq, Feb. 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

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

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

SUPPORT G.I. RESISTANCE:



www.ivaw.org

GI Special www.militaryproject.org
*This is how Bush brings the troops home,
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.*

A photograph showing several soldiers in a field. One soldier is lying on a stretcher, being carried by other soldiers. The scene appears to be a medical evacuation or a transport of a wounded soldier.

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