

# Traveling Soldier

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org>

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" Without the active support of military service members, this war cannot continue. ...  
[W]ithout people to drive the trucks, to man the checkpoints, and to go out on nightly raids, no war is possible"

As we enter 2008, please stop for a moment and consider where we are now, and where we are going.

In just over a year, America will have a new President.

We will have endured a year of campaign commercials and attack ads.

We'll have watched debates devoid of any real discussion of the withdrawal from Iraq that a growing number of Americans now call for. We'll have waited, for yet another year, for our leaders to find a way to say what we know in our hearts: we must leave Iraq.

But what will have changed in the next year that will make that happen?

We must face this fact: we run the serious risk that one year from today we'll be right where we are now, but with another year's worth of casualties, a year's worth of grieving families, a year's worth of Iraqi anger and suffering built on our occupation of a country we now know was no threat to us.

Ending this war in a year is different than ending it now, just as



ending it now is different than ending it a year ago, or a year before that.

There is a price to pay for every day that we wait.

As a veteran who served in Iraq as a military police sergeant, I see our continued occupation of that country as more than simply a list of numbers.

On daily patrols through Baghdad and other cities, your glance darts from one window to the next and you look with suspicion at everyone you pass, waiting to be attacked.

Every time you drive, you anxiously scan the roadways and gutters, anticipating the explosion of a

roadside bomb that will send burning shards of metal through both vehicles and flesh.

Indiscriminate home raids at all hours of the day and night become a common experience, as do the mass detentions of terrified and angry Iraqis.

You spend hours at checkpoints, with your finger on the trigger, prepared to make life and death decisions in a country where the line between civilians and combatants is blurred and in constant motion.

These things take a toll, on our soldiers, their families, and the Iraqi people.

As members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, we know these things and many of us still face them on a daily basis.

Despite what you see on TV, or read in the paper, this is daily life in Iraq.

A year from now, will we have moved any closer to withdrawal?

Or will our leaders continue to push such a decision off into the future, where, like so many decisions made by the powerful, the price to be

paid rests squarely on the shoulders of the next generation?

We are at a crossroads: we can focus our energy exclusively on an election in which no viable candidate is committed to rapid withdrawal, or we can spend the next year ensuring that whoever takes office, Republican or Democrat, will face a country mobilized to the cause of bringing our troops home.

The veterans and active duty troops of Iraq Veterans Against the War represent the generation that is living with the pain and consequences of our leaders' daily decision to continue this war.

We have watched our closest friends be killed and injured, we've seen innocent people dehumanized and destroyed.

We are first-hand witnesses and participants of an illegal war and occupation and we are here to tell you that we have had enough.

We have come together, as members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, with this message: It is time to put this awful chapter of our history behind us.

It is time to do the right thing for the people of Iraq and the people of America.

It is time.

We've been here before.

In the aftermath of the 2006 elections, the analysts said it plainly:

the issue that had brought the Democrats to power was opposition to the war. Hundreds of thousands of people worked phone banks, canvassed their neighbors, made signs, and raised money for that election cycle, but it was not enough to end the war.

Why not?

The political leadership and the pundits have settled on the excuse that the Democrats don't have enough power in Congress to get it done.

But we think it is something else – we have failed to force our leaders into action.

This is not a unique situation in history.

Looking back on successful movements, what is the common denominator?

Has real change occurred when people relied on politicians to do the right thing, or when a movement of people used their strength to move this country forward?

We propose the second path – organizing Americans to move our leaders to do what must be done. Iraq Veterans Against the War has spent the last year devising a strategy and tactics to bring our troops home.

Our plans are not contingent on a particular candidate, or a party, because we're not willing to roll the political dice on something as important as this.

Our strategy is simple: organize the men and women of our armed forces to withdraw their support for the war.

Our reason for choosing this strategy is also simple: without the active support of military service members, this war cannot continue.

The government has shown that no matter which lever people pull on Election day, they can continue, and even escalate, the war.

But without people to drive the trucks, to man the checkpoints, and to go out on nightly raids, no war is possible.

Of course, we don't expect to be able to convince the entirety of our armed forces to go on strike, but what percentage of soldiers would need to stand up against this war before our leaders decide that they cannot continue?

One percent?

Five?

We aim to find out.

We're drawing the line, and we're asking you to join us.

All over the country, veterans and members of the military are organizing chapters of Iraq Veterans Against the War in cities, in rural areas, and on military bases.

Last year at this time, we had eight chapters.

Today, we have 37, with more forming all the time.

We need your help to support those who are doing this important work on the ground.

We know what our brothers and sisters are going through in Iraq, and we're putting plans in motion to put an end to it.

Not a year from now.

Not next month.

Today.

Peace,

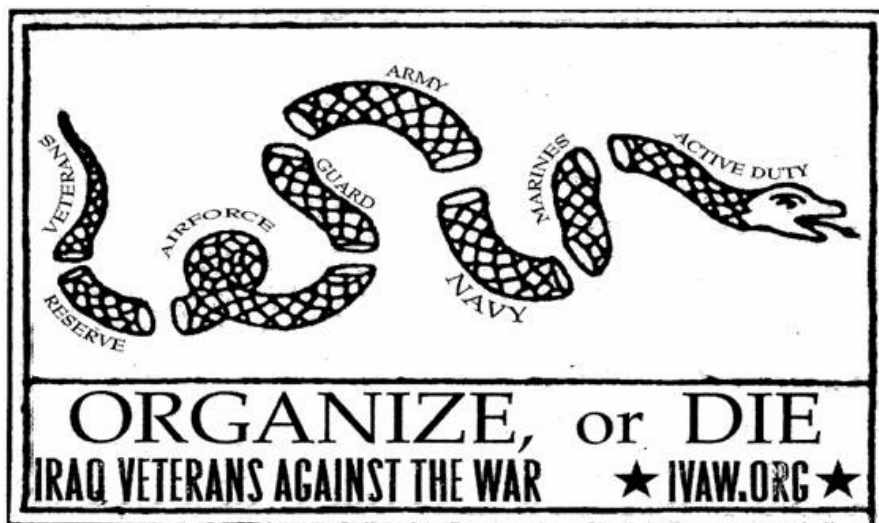
**Kelly Dougherty**

**Former Sergeant**

**Army National Guard**

**Executive Director**

**Iraq Veterans Against the War**



# Mailbag

[The photo to the right ran in the last issue of *Traveling Soldier*.]

Thanks for the photo. This is a very powerful photo here.

A sure sign that the tide is beginning to turn. And I don't think I'm being idealistic about this.

Even while I was in [Iraq], you would not have made it 5 feet in public with a peace sign on your kevlar, especially one this size and so obvious.

It speaks volumes that so many of his peers and superiors allowed it for so long.

Very reminiscent of another time and another war, eh?

This is truly exciting.

– J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War & The Military Project



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## Bridging The Gap

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam Veterans Against The War

There is a broken bridge that they call America  
between the people and their government.  
Stressed out cracked TV's, broken fractured newspapers  
with jagged concrete facts that they call Iraq.  
There's a broken bridge between our Soldiers  
and what they were told they were fighting for.  
There is a broken bridge across the Euphrates river  
like a broken bridge across the Mississippi too.  
Rivers of darkness and light that flow  
a lightning bolt currents dark and dangerous,  
pieces of humans lay at the bottom and who is responsible,  
who does not care at all as the rain and sand  
fall like teardrops trying to see through the murky waters,  
trying to find a way out, trying to stop the bleeding,  
trying to kill the cause and Americans  
stand and watch the horror of civilization  
pounded by combat boots, they want to stop it  
but they doubt it like by voting the war away.  
Captain Amerika still acting like superman,  
the Statue of Liberty is cracking like the economy,  
who cares about a war debt, put it on a Chinese credit card,  
green back dollars going down and down drowning  
another bridge falling into the water.  
To the energy poor depression crashed civilians  
of a war wreck they once called America,  
the Answer is within our Soldiers  
when they come back from another tour.  
The Answer is within Americans  
when they stand behind the Soldiers  
when they refuse to deploy on a no way next tour

## **BRIDGING THE GAP: MAKING IT HAPPEN**

**An Organizers' Conference**

**April 5, 2008 at 10 AM**

**Middle Collegiate Church**

**50 East 7th St.**

**New York, New York**

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

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

**THIS IS AN ORGANIZERS' CONFERENCE FOR  
PEOPLE WHO WISH TO ACT TOGETHER TO  
BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN CIVILIANS AND  
MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES  
BY DIRECT CONTACT**

CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY:

The Military Project – [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org)  
[With the assistance of *Traveling Soldier* & *GI Special*]

# Active-Duty and Vets Organize Against the War at Fort Hood

By **Chelsea Hover**

*News 8 Austin*

February 17, 2008

To see the video report, visit:

[http://www.news8austin.com/shared/video/video\\_pop.asp?destlist=49484](http://www.news8austin.com/shared/video/video_pop.asp?destlist=49484)

A growing number of active duty soldiers or recent Iraq war veterans are speaking up about the war in Iraq.

And with the number of soldiers speaking up about their experiences in Iraq via online forums, blogs and pamphlets, some vets feel it's their duty to let the American public know the truth.

"The honest truth is that if the American people knew what was going on over there everyday, they would be raising their voices too. They would be saying, 'Hey, bring those guys home,'" Sgt. Selena Coppa said.

Coppa blames lawmakers in Washington for filtering the facts on the war in Iraq. She said there's no real end in sight.

"There is a cost to this war. This war is being paid in American blood, in my soldier's blood. And that is not okay," Coppa said.

"We lost really good friends, really good leaders who died in Iraq. From my perspective, it didn't make any sense, we didn't accomplish anything, and I talked to a lot of other soldiers who feel the

same way," Fort Hood soldier Casey Porter said.

He started the local branch of IVAW at Fort Hood.

Porter is spending his numbered days in the U.S. passing out pamphlets before he is redeployed this summer.

A group of Fort Hood soldiers are breaking the silence, and making known their opposition to the war in Iraq.

He said he feels it's his obligation to his fallen brothers to take action. Local IVAW members are trying to let other soldiers know it's okay to do the same.

"This is well within the rights that service members have, but not many soldiers know that they do have," Fort Hood soldier Ronn Cantu said.

He's also home between deployments to Iraq.

"I honestly thought I might not live through my second tour, so I thought, you know if I'm going to die anyway, I need to say the things I need to say," Cantu said.

Those things are now being said loud and clear.

Sunday, a group took part in what they call a blitz, plastering busy areas of Killeen with informational pamphlets about their mission, and soldiers' rights.



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"It's soldier's lives being tossed away on this never-ending bad wager, in the hope that somehow, someday, a big win will come out of it"

**By Army Sergeant, Iraq Veterans Against The War**  
From Disaffected and It Feels So Good, an OIF/OEF veteran blogger

I think that is in fact what is my greatest issue with the way a lot of people argue in favor of the war. "We have to stay there, because people have died there, and we have to honor their service."

Well, if we stay because people have died there, then we're going to be staying forever, because more people will continue to die to ensure that those who have died will in some way not be mistreated.

We've all seen the smaller version of this.

The guy who keeps buying lottery ticket after lottery ticket, because he's already thrown so much money away that it would be wasteful if he didn't keep it up until he won. Or the guy who goes to Vegas or Atlantic City and winds up losing everything, because he didn't want to quit the table while he was behind.

He had to have a win to save face, and now when he comes home, he'll be sleeping on the couch for months.

That's essentially where we're at. In a manner reminiscent of "I won't be the first president to lose a war," nobody wants to be the guy who rains on the parade, admits that primary sources show we were lied and misled into war, and says it's time to cut our losses and move out.

That our 'goals' are unrealistic, and there is in fact no winning condition for Iraq.

I challenge everyone reading this – and yes, I even include the radical right-wingers who drop by. Can you

provide me a criteria for winning that includes specifics in two sentences or less? A criteria, after which it is met, US troops will be able to leave because the job is done?

"Don't quit until the job is done" only applies if there is a valid and reachable job to do. It does not apply if your only motivating factor is "not to look weak."

Because it's not just money being thrown away by some guy in a casino that's happening now.

Oh, money is certainly being thrown away – thrown away on contractors, thrown away on mistaken goals, thrown away on projects that fail, pointless new

uniforms even the Army acknowledges have issues, buying more bad weapons that produce cringe-worthy dust tests.

Now it's soldier's lives being tossed away on this never-ending bad wager, in the hope that somehow, someday, a big win will come out of it.

It is a sobering reflection of how much death has been occurring that the Army has authorized Gold Star lapel pins on the

uniform.

We don't even know the real cost of the Iraq War in people, because the figures that would be most important aren't being released.

What about the figures of the wounded?

What about the figures of the people who come back psychologically damaged and no longer able to function effectively as a normal person, upping our already awful divorce statistics? What about the suicide rate?

Soldiers aren't chips on a gambling table, and they shouldn't be treated that way by uncaring politicians who have no personal investment in ending the war.

