

Traveling Soldier

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Issue #18

“This is bullshit and I’m calling you out Uncle Sam!”

“Given that we are having more and more compensation seeking veterans, I’d like to suggest that you refrain from giving a diagnosis of PTSD straight out,” Norma Perez wrote in an e-mail to psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers at the Olin E. Teague Veterans’ Center in Temple, Texas, which is run by the VA. Her bright alternative was to “consider a diagnosis of Adjustment Disorder.”

VA staff members “really don’t...have time to do the extensive testing that should be done to determine PTSD,” said Perez.

Let me ask you this Ms. Perez: What is the VA so busy doing?

What is more important to the Department of Veterans Affairs than the Veteran’s Affairs?

These soldiers aren’t looking for a handout, they are expecting you to do your job and help them!!

They rely on your lazy asses!!

Do your fucking job and deliver!!

This is yet another sign that this war is producing problems we can’t deal with properly. We cannot simply throw our veterans to the curb with a bottle of Motrin and some sleeping pills. Some of these men and women are very sick and without this help, they are doomed to our bridges and culverts. Doomed to die drunk on the railroad tracks and in the homeless shelters or to be beaten cruelly by urban youth. Doomed to waste away as empty shells while their family stands by unable to reach their loved ones.

The government is worried about the estimated 4-6 billion dollar cost of veteran’s health care over the next 2 years, but apparently they have no problem spending 4 trillion on bombs and overpriced toilet seats.

Apparently you have the money to take us on a 15 month date in the desert and never call us back!



I feel pretty used.

These statistics don’t even include the hundreds of thousands on active duty for whom it is virtually impossible to seek treatment without unofficial or career shaking recourse.

Whether Norma Perez is acting on her own or at the behest of a higher power, this is bullshit and I’m calling you out Uncle Sam!

– Bryan Hannah, Iraq Veterans Against the War
Branch of service: United States Army

Unit: 1st Cav

Rank: SPC

Home: Munising, Michigan

Served in: Fort Hood, Kuwait, Iraq.

I.V.A.W. Report on Outreach to GIs: "95-98% Were Very Receptive"

WHO: IVAW Los Angeles, VFP, + Civilian Allies
WHAT: GI Outreach
WHERE: Los Alamitos, CA

I had two teams of 3-4 people. One was posted outside the main gate passing out sit-reps and brownies and cookies (that included in the wrapping a card with IVAW.org and "Honor the warrior, not the war") to vehicles exiting the base.

The other team, myself included, drove on base. I gave the soldier at the gate a sit-rep and brownie after checking my ID.

On base we gave 48 brownies to a group of at risk/drop out Los Angeles high school students who were doing physical training under army sergeants.

An MP had been sent to watch us and I gave him a sit-rep and brownie also. He took it and said thanks. After I asked him if he was sent to watch us, he responded by saying that he had cameras all over the base and found out about us as soon as we reached the gate.

Team B, proceeded to post at the base PX and pass out sit-reps and brownies.

About 20 minutes later, the same MP from before informed us that he was sorry but he was here to escort us off base.

One lady entering the PX was very vocal and told him not to apologize. She said we had no right to protest on base, and we needed to get off base and protest there. I engaged her and asked her if we were

protesting. We were just handing out brownies and sit-reps.

We got into my car and he asked us for our IDs after receiving the order on the radio. He took my license plate number down also and we proceeded to get off base.

We then scoped out other areas that we could post. We found a history teacher on the way to his son's little league game who asked for a sit-rep to show to his class. I offered to visit his class and engage them.

Team A at the gate was very successful and found by their accounts 95-98% were very receptive.

I did see one lady who returned the sit-rep and brownie after circling around.

We plan to continue this action monthly in order to become familiar with the soldiers.

Unfortunately many of the units are taking time off because of the upcoming annual training.

All in all I think this was a very good action.

A trial if you will and we know for future reference how to operate logistically.

What works best are 3-4 man teams maximum, avoid mob presence, and preferably station a group of people away from the gate and from traffic for those who are receptive and would like to engage in a conversation.

The Los Alamitos police was amicable and just warned us to not obstruct traffic.

Best,

Wendy Barranco

Iraq Veterans Against the War, LA



“ The only way to stop Vietnam was for we the lowly jarheads and grunts to take our fingers off the triggers and say no”

In 1966 I realized that the ONLY way to stop vietnam was for WE the lowly jarheads and grunts to take our fingers off the triggers and say NO.

I did and have been in trouble ever since!! LOL.

The military and the "support the troops" piss ants in this country are the very first ones to shove us into killing for their "peace and democracy" , and the last ones to defend or care for us after we finish doing their dirty work.

Last night I got a 3 hour going over by 3 supporters of this insane war, they now admit that "Vietnam was a horrible, terrible thing" but here we are..... repeating the mistakes of the past over, and over, and over again.

I now believe that moreso than demonstrations, we have to confront these true believers in

person..... in small or large groups..... and keep challenging the false assumption that war is good..... or that this one is winnable.

"Support the troops, screw the veteran" is what they really need to say. In truth this country is not even

supporting the front line much less those blown to pieces and laying in those damned hospitals.

Bush sucks.
– **Penumbra**



“ Bridging the Gap, Making It Happen”

Report on the April 5th Organizers’ Conference in NYC April

by **Elaine Brower**

I. Introduction

Organized by The Military Project, with the assistance of *GI Special* (www.militaryproject.org) and *Traveling Soldier* (www.travelingsoldier.com), the Conference “Bridging the Gap, Making it Happen,” held on Saturday, April 5th in Middle Collegiate Church,

New York City, was, to say the least, spectacular!

At last there was an organizers’ conference to bring together people who are sick and fed up with endless war, and endless protests, to exchange ideas, learn techniques and speak to others who are actually doing face to face outreach with active duty military, National Guard and Reserves. Bringing together union members and veterans who oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to do direct, face-to-face outreach to troops will prove to be

a combustible combination that can help troops turning against the wars build a movement that stops them.

Speakers included Selena D. Coppa, an active duty Army Sergeant stationed at Darmstadt, Germany and a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW); Jeff Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW); Mike Hastie, Vietnam Veteran and photographer; Garrett Reppenhagen, IVAW; Dennis Serdel, Vietnam Veteran and poet; Richard Boyle,

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author and Vietnam war reporter; Sanford Kelson, Veterans for Peace (VFP); and Clarence Thomas, National Co-Chair of the Million Worker March and Executive Board member of Local 10, International Longshore and Warehouse Workers Union based in San Francisco.

GI resistance was the instrument that ended the Vietnam War. Those who spoke on the panels, such as “First Hand Reports on Sentiment Against the Wars in the Armed Forces;” “Resistance Through Evocation: Photographs, Poems;” “Troops Resist War; Vietnam and Iraq, Eyewitnesses;” “Outreach to the Troops: Organizing Tactics in the Real World;” and, a presentation from Daniel Joseph Black, Iraq Veterans Against the War and Clarence Thomas, Local 10, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, totally roused the audience of veterans and civilians interested in talking face to face with active duty military, guard and reserves.

Richard Boyle, Vietnam War Reporter, and author of *Flower of the Dragon: The Breakdown of the US Army in Viet Nam*, spoke about how he personally risked his life to drop into Firebase Pace during a time when soldiers there numbered about 400 and the VC enemy forces were upwards of 4,000. He gave a chilling account of how the soldiers were told to perform a recon mission and scout the perimeter, while they all knew they were completely outnumbered and did not want to die in a useless bloodbath of a war.

They decided to refuse orders, and mutiny. Boyle documented the resistance with photographs and on his small cassette tape recorder. He was able to smuggle the documentation of this mutiny out of the country, where he then tried to get Congress to listen and learn about how, even though the Pentagon and military officials kept insisting there were no troops in that firebase, that they were there and had refused to fight. (for more about

Richard Boyle see: <http://movies.nytimes.com/person/82692/Richard-Boyle>)

II. IVAW: Spread and nurture resistance!

Selena Coppa, active duty military Army Sgt. and a member of IVAW, as well as a mother, is an example of organizing against the war while still “on the inside” of the military. She speaks to believing in the oath she swore to, and feels it is her duty to lead by example. She joined IVAW believing it is the only moral thing to do in the current situation. Sgt. Coppa is currently stationed in Darmstadt, Germany and spends time talking to other soldiers about the war. She organized active duty military while at Ft. Hood and also at Ft. Meade. She states, “I just start by asking someone ‘what do you think about this war?’ and get into a conversation.” “At first, the officers weren’t too happy about what I was doing, but now it is much easier.”

Daniel Joseph Black, United States Marine Corps, 2000 to 2005 (served in Fallujah, Iraq, as well as Kuwait) and a member of Iraq Veterans Against the

War, spoke brilliantly about how he discovered after his tours in Iraq, that the war was illegal and immoral. Black states, “We never swore to obey, we swore to defend and if defending requires our disobedience of an autocratic war criminal, then we are so bound by our oath to defend the Constitution.” (read more at www.ivaw.org/member/daniel-joseph-black).

Garett Reppenhagen (former Army Scout Sniper, 2-63 AR BN 1st Infantry Division 2002 to 2005) and Jeff Englehart (former Army Specialist, 19 Delta-Cavalry Scout from 2001 to 2005) served in Iraq at the same time, but were in different locations. While stationed in Iraq, they started a blog against the war “Fight to Survive,” which they did when each of them were stationed in different locations, not even spending time together. They worked along with fellow soldiers on the frontlines to keep the blog going.

This blog, the first of its kind, attracted the attention of the officers, and caused problems for one soldier. However, the anti-war messages kept going out and received notoriety amongst the ranks. They were also inspired to continue their fight against

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the war while still stationed in Iraq by reading “Flower of the Dragon.”

Both Garrett and Jeff spent time in Iraq talking to other soldiers about the futility of the war, the total lack of reasons to be there, and the horror of it all. They put up stickers around the base where they were stationed which said “Bush Lied, Who Died!” Now, members of IVAW, they continue their struggle to speak to active duty military at various military bases about organizing tactics against the war (visit the links to read more postings written by Garrett

www.ivaw.org/member/garett-reppenhausen-0) and Jeff www.ivaw.org/membersspeak/supporting-gi-resistance).

Fabian Bouthillette, former US Naval Lieutenant, and a graduate of the Naval Academy; a member of IVAW and the Military Project, led the discussion about how important it was for members of the anti-war movement to do outreach to the troops. He said, “When I got out of the Navy, I knew the war was wrong, but didn’t know how to go about expressing that. I joined IVAW, and then met members of the Military Project. It dawned on me that this was the thing to do. Go and speak to the troops. And that’s what I have been doing ever since.”

III. Support from Labor Against the War, Veterans For Peace & Civilian activists

Sandy Kelson, VFP, who organized two weeks of outreach at Ft. Stewart Army base, which is home to roughly 19,000 soldiers, of which approximately 15,000 are currently deployed, talked about direct outreach at the base. In February, 2008, he and others, stood at a traffic light right before the entrance and distributed 500 copies of “Sir, No Sir!”, the Dave Zieger film about GI resistance during Vietnam, and 385 copies of “The

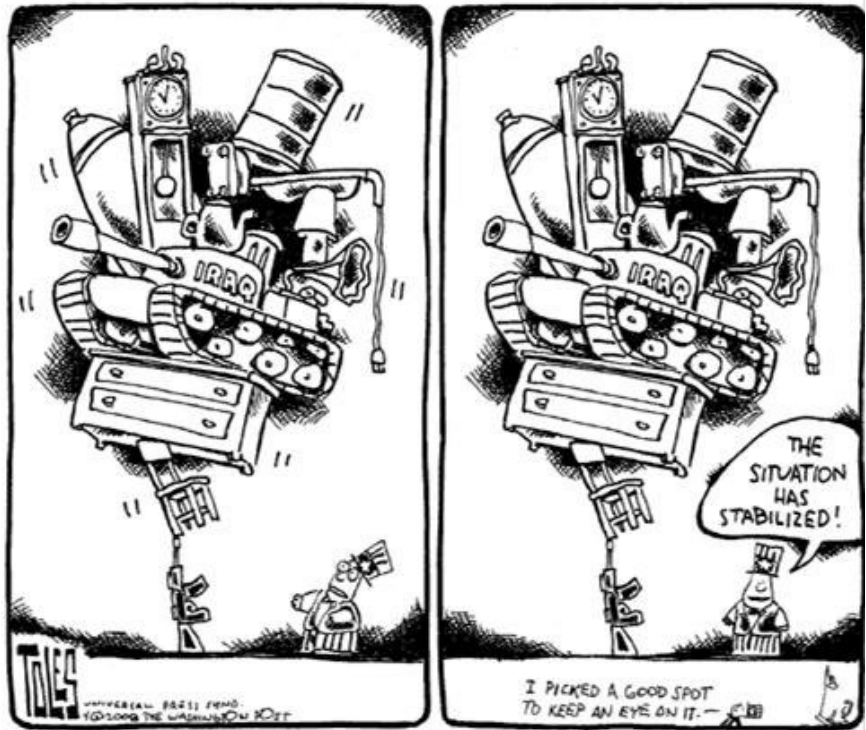
Ground Truth”, a film documenting resistance by the military against the war in Iraq, as well as 1300 packets of leaflets, including VFP and IVAW applications, Appeal for Redress, GI Rights pocket cards, and other materials. Sometime after they did this outreach they discovered that the PX and other locations on the base were discussing the materials that they had delivered.

Mike Hastie, Vietnam Veteran and

wrenching poems which can be found regularly in the publication GI Special at www.militaryproject.org. The audience was completely silent and greatly touched during the reading.

Other veterans who spoke about the importance of doing face to face outreach to the troops were Alberto Jaccoma, and Alan Stolzer, both members of VFP and the Military Project. Jaccoma said, “I went to a

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photographer, presented his evocation against the war by displaying his vividly moving pictures from Vietnam. His photos were hung around the room surrounding the audience and reminding them about the quagmire that this Country led us into almost 40 years ago, and how eerily similar it was to what is happening today. He particularly moved the crowd by removing 5 of his hanging photos and read stories related in the captions. Faces of Vietnamese children, men & women, soldiers who were all adversely affected by the devastation they had witnessed and lived through.

Dennis Serdel, Vietnam Veteran and member of VFP, read his extremely moving and heart

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meeting where a group was planning to do something... hold hands...and we did that, and I thought 'what does this mean'. Then I go to the armory and feel like I have accomplished something." "It's hard to be there at 5:30 in the morning, in the snow and rain, and you think 'what am I crazy?' but when you leave you feel like you've accomplished something."

Of course there are the civilians who believe that outreach to the troops is the way to end this war.

Presentations by Katherine Gorell, Johanna Petit and Elaine Brower, all of the Military Project, talked about how they got involved in this kind of work. Katherine Gorell, whose father was a Vietnam Veteran, and died from agent orange poisoning, is a zealot when it comes to trips to the local Harlem armory. "There's nothing more productive, or useful. Protests just don't work." Johanna Petit, who lives by the naval base in Connecticut, started by handing out GI Rights materials to the sailors either in the mall or at the Groton Naval Base.

I spoke about roaming the Country in search of military installations to hand out flyers to the troops. Starting outreach at 29 Palms Marine Corps Base in California when my son was stationed there to leave for Iraq in 2005, I told the audience, "Before I left for California, I called some friends who are part of a local chapter of "World Can't Wait, Drive Out the Bush Regime. They met me and we went to the corner, about a block outside the main gate and we held a banner that said "Drive Out the Bush Regime!" "We handed out flyers to cars at the intersection that talked about how bad the war was, as well as the problems with this government, and marines in uniform took them. They gave us the peace sign, thumbs up and fists up all the way and that was in 2005! When I got back on the base to see my son, he said 'mom, some of the guys said they saw you on

the corner with signs and stuff?', "no not me," I said.

Michael Letwin of New York City Labor Against the War (NYCLAW), who spoke and introduced a fellow union member from California, Clarence Thomas. The conference wrapped up with a presentation by Thomas, National Co-Chair of the "Million Worker March", and Executive Board member of Local 10 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union who spoke on "Iraq Veterans + Union Workers = History In Motion." The history of this particular Local 10 and its members is one of courageous acts. Before the war started, Thomas addressed a crowd of over 2 million anti-war activists in London that February 2003.

In a statement made to labor leaders gathered last year in San Francisco he called on workers to stand up and take organized action against the war in Iraq, saying that politicians can't be counted on to halt the bloodshed. "Until people get off their asses and do something, there won't be change." On May 1st the ILWU, dockworkers plan to stop work for eight hours in U.S. West Coast ports. "No peace, no work" holiday was declared for May Day, International Workers' Day.

His fiery speech at the conference brought cheers as he spoke to the importance of union solidarity with Iraq Veterans Against the War and his commitment to supporting outreach to the troops. "It's a working man's military, and we are all part of the same union of brotherhood." (to watch video go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jxhrDNzugo> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ms9-NBYltL4>)

IV. The new generation of resisters

This conference helped provide materials, motivation and acted as a catalyst to those who understand that outreach to the troops is the way to end not only end the occupation in Iraq, but could exert an influence on how and when our government decides to deploy the armed forces. Some of us remember the days of the GI resistance during the Vietnam war, and how it grew exponentially while the peace movement remained stagnant and ineffective. Once the force of those military members turned against the governmental structure and all that it was doing, they were unstoppable.

We are seeing the growth of a new GI rebellion. On the heels of "Winter Soldier 2008: Eyewitness accounts of the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan" (see <http://www.ivaw.org/wintersoldier/testimony>), this conference stressed the need to nurture that resistance by forming an alliance, or bridging the gap, between the civilians who are determined to put an end to the imperialistic occupation, and the members of the armed forces who are refusing to protect and defend a lie, continue the bloodbath that politicians refuse to stop, kill and die in the process.

If you are paying attention, you will see that not only the power of this resistance is mighty, it is increasing daily. Members of the military completely understand what is happening in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan, and have the ultimate power to stop it.

Those civilians who get it must organize to do outreach wherever we live, whatever military installation you can frequent, and talk to those soldiers, sailors and marines. They want to hear you, see you, and hunger for the information you can share with them, as we have done.

Beware Of Useless Drugging For PTSD: “Reliving A Traumatic Experience By Writing Or Talking About It Is The Only Therapy Proved Effective By Independent Research”

Army Times, April 14, 2008

By Kelly Kennedy

[Excerpts]

Post-traumatic stress disorder experts say service members aren't seeking care, aren't getting enough time to recover between deployments and aren't receiving medications or therapies that are known to be effective.

“Problems related to getting troops adequate mental health treatment cannot be resolved unless two issues — stigma and access — are addressed,” Todd Bowers, director of government affairs for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, told the House Veterans' Affairs subcommittee on health on April 1.

Almost 59,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with PTSD by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Army post-deployment health assessments have found that 20 percent of active-duty and 40 percent of reserve-component troops had symptoms of PTSD, and some experts say the real numbers could be much higher.

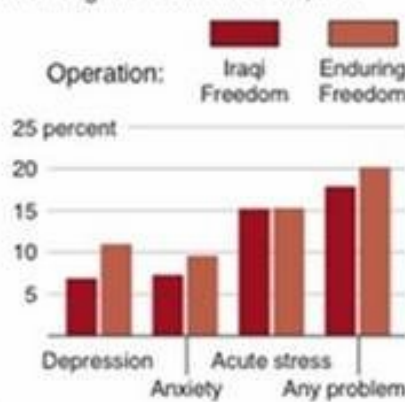
But because PTSD hasn't been addressed until fairly recently — the first scientific paper about the disorder in veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War didn't come out until five years after that war ended — VA and Pentagon officials say much needs to be done to determine good screening techniques and therapies.

Depression higher in Afghanistan

Soldiers fighting in Afghanistan suffered more behavioral health problems than their counterparts in Iraq last year.

Behavioral health

For brigade combat teams, 2007



SOURCE: Mental Health Advisory Team V AP

“This is the first war where DoD and VA recognized the psychological impact going in,” said Army Col. Charles Hoge, chief of psychiatry and neuroscience at the Walter Reed Institute of Research.

He told the American Legion on March 31 that he must “look through a completely different lens” from that used by therapists treating civilians with PTSD.

Combat vets are not sleeping, experience startle reactions and are hyper-alert.

“All of these things that we label as symptoms are things they need in combat,” Hoge said. “No sooner are

they transitioned back home than they're right back in rotation.”

At the House hearing, Hoge said an Army assessment last summer showed that the numbers of soldiers with PTSD is going up with each deployment.

“There's a direct connection between mental health and multiple deployments,” he said, adding that troops also need more time between deployments.

David Matcher, of the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, said a recent study found that research has not shown serotonin reuptake inhibitors, such as Prozac, Zoloft or Celexa, to be effective in treating PTSD.

Exposure therapy — reliving a traumatic experience by writing or talking about it — is the only therapy proved effective by independent research, he said.

Other treatments exist, but they have been tested mainly by the same people who developed them.

That's an important point because the Defense Department and VA use several such methods, including group and drug therapy, to treat combat veterans.

Staff writer William H.

McMichael contributed to this report.