

Traveling Soldier

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Issue #19

"My squad and I are all behind IVAW 100% . . . This war is bullsh-t"

[Excerpts from Iraq Veterans Against The War mailed fund appeal, June 10, 2008]

Dear Friend,

Iraq Veterans Against the Wars work to end the Iraq occupation is building momentum, and we need your continued financial support.

When you receive your economic stimulus check from George W. Bush, please donate it to IVAW to help us fuel the growing GI resistance movement that will end this war.

More Members = More Resistance

Since our powerful Winter Soldier hearings in March, IVAW has experienced an explosion in membership. Increasingly, these new members are active duty troops, overburdened by multiple tours, betrayed by their government, and ready to take action.

Many of these troops watched Winter Soldier live via our worldwide satellite broadcast.

Here's what one soldier emailed us during that amazing weekend:

"I am writing to you from Baghdad . My name is SSgt _____ and I'm in the 10 mountain division and I am a [XXXXXX] native.

"I heard about what IVAW has been participating in this weekend (Winter Soldier) and I must say I am very happy to hear this.

"I am a squad leader serving on my third tour and my squad and I are all behind IVAW 100%.

"This war is bulls__t and we are all tired of dealing with it.

"I'm not sure what we can do from here, but we want to help in any way we can.

Sincerely,

SSgt_____



We know that for a growing number of service members questioning Iraq war policy, IVAW is known, respected, and provides a spiritual comfort reminding them that they are not alone.

Our active duty members in Iraq report that you can now see IVAW graffiti scrawled in latrines on bases there. We can barely keep up with the demands that this new and energized membership brings, but we are excited about the opportunities these members create to increase our power to end the occupation.

That is why I am asking for your help today.

This summer, over the course of 10 weeks, IVAW will take Winter Soldier on the road.

We will tour the country visiting 10 major military bases and their surrounding communities to share our eye-witness accounts of war, collect additional Winter Soldier testimony, and show active duty troops that they have a right to speak out.

We expect to double the number of IVAW active duty chapters on military bases by summer's end.

This will take a lot of resources, and your donation will make a huge difference.

It is also a time for Iraq Veterans Against the War to reflect on how far we've come as a movement.

We have grown from just eight members to over 1,200 strong, and from a staff of one to ten.

We have 45 active chapters, including four on military bases.

We have developed strong young leaders across the country, and in February, hired our first two full-time organizers. We will hire three more organizers by the end of the year.

While we are proud of our achievements, we will not rest until all of our brothers and sisters are home and cared for, and the Iraqi people receive due reparations.

Because two-thirds of our funding comes from individuals, we depend on you to make our work possible.

What better way to stimulate the economy than donating to spread GI resistance across the military, so that we can finally end the billions in wasted resources on the occupation in Iraq ?

And who better to end the occupation than fed-up GI's focused and organized by IVAW?

You are our partner in this effort, so please give today.

Sincerely,

Kelly Dougherty

Executive Director

P.S. We are counting on you to help us during this important summer.

Please make a contribution now.

Iraq Veterans Against The War

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" I choose to commemorate July Fourth by recommitting myself to living by the ideals which were blazed that day"

By Sergeant Selena Coppa
Iraq Veterans Against The War
July 2, 2008

"Gentlemen cry peace, peace, but there is no peace, the war is already begun!" - Patrick Henry, 1775

July Fourth is coming. I know that to a lot of people, Americans, all it means is fireworks in a night sky, barbecues and roasting meat, hot summer days and cool beers. For too many people it's just a holiday, an extra day off from work where they get to wear red, white, and blue.

If they are feeling particularly patriotic, they may whisper to their children, "This is the day America became free."

I don't wear red, white and blue, and I don't wave paper flags. Sometimes I don't even have a celebration.

The Founding Fathers certainly had no celebration, tucked away as they were, rebelling from a distance, the



certain underdog against England's might.

No, how I choose to commemorate July Fourth is by recommitting myself to living by the ideals which were blazed that day.

I think of a handful of men, who gathered together despite a repressive occupation, who joined their "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor" to combat injustice.

Men who decided that it was intolerable to accept abuses without standing up against them.

Men who lost everything, in many cases up to and including their lives, that a nation might be born which would live for a thousand years in freedom and justice.

I think back to those bold men, whose deeds blazed across the sky.

I think of how I can possibly live up to what they asked of themselves, to what they asked of those who might follow in their footsteps.

To the dreams they held and battled the darkness for.

And I remember what I am.

I am an active duty soldier, who sees a duty to the country I love, the country birthed so many years ago to be a just and righteous nation, where each and every citizen would have the right to petition for redress of grievances, and to print whatever they pleased about their government.

I see a duty to all those who have died for these ideals - everyone whose red blood was shed to give our flag its color, who dreamed that generation after generation, patriots would always stand ready to answer America's call.

What a low, shivering thing would I be, if I saw the truth, that America is wasting its soldiers, breaking its

military, and destroying its economy, all in the name of the interests of a few, and I did not stand up!

If I did not stand up for fear, or a wish to preserve my comfort.

If I did not stand up for fear of reprisal, or imprisonment - how those Founding Fathers would be ashamed!

I would like to think that if they saw me here, now, along with the ranks of the rest of our active duty soldiers who are standing up against this injustice, they would be proud. Would be proud of the spirit that still stands strong in America.

Why stand the rest of you silent? The war is already begun! Not just the war in Iraq, but the war here at home, to wake a complacent citizenry to action!

The time for sitting at home and thinking hopeful thoughts is over!

This July Fourth, and every day until the troops are home and treated like the country which has used the best and brightest in them owes, I swear to act!

Join with me.

Join with us.

We, the active duty IVAW members, and even those who are against the war but do not yet know they can be with us, are waiting.

"In accordance with AR 360-1, the opinions expressed in this statement are those of the individual and do not reflect the official positions or policies of the Department of Defense, the United States Army, or the United States Government."

" We Must, As A Nation, Once Again, Embrace Defiance, Rebellion, And Resistance! "

By Adam Charles Kokesh,
Iraq Veterans Against The War
Branch: United States Marine Corps
(USMC)
Rank: Sergeant
July 4, 2008

I was a reservist attending Claremont McKenna College in January 2004 when I volunteered to transfer from November Battery 5/14 (artillery) which was not deploying, to the 3rd Civil Affairs Group which was leaving in less than a month.

I served in the Fallujah area from February to September and received the Combat Action Ribbon and Navy Commendation medal for my service.

While as soldiers who have taken an oath we all have a responsibility to support the system that ensures us the quality of life that we enjoy in America, we also have a responsibility as citizens to ensure that the system is held accountable to the American people and to the highest moral standard. I can be reached at adam.kokesh@gmail.com. See also: kokesh.blogspot.com

As a naturally rebellious spirit, Independence Day has a special place in my heart.

In elementary school, I was the kid in the back of the classroom who would always get into arguments with the teacher.



They all said that I should be a lawyer when I grow up, presuming I could muster the patience required for

law school. In middle school, I went punk, always had a crazy haircut, and wore a lot of shirts with skulls and other dark themes.

One of them had a skeleton with a k-bar and a Marine Corps 8-point cover on his grape. It read: U.S.M.C. - UNCLE SAM'S MISGUIDED CHILDREN.

When I joined the Marines and started learning about our history, (they taught us about Smedley Butler, but not that he wrote a book called *War Is A Racket*) the one quote that stuck with me was from the legendary Marine, Chesty Puller.

In boot camp, some platoons get to say, "Goodnight Chesty, wherever you are!" every night in unison while laying in the position of attention in their racks. The quote is, "You're not a real Marine until you get busted down once or twice."

I didn't think I would be able to live up to that standard, but fortunately, I was wrong.

Senior Marines would regale me with tales of their craziness, and brag about doing things like driving drunk, getting pulled over, and having the cop let them get away with it. Then explain

it like this, "But America needs crazy mother-f'ers like us around. That's what it takes. Americans sleep soundly at night because they know guys like us can be on any beach in less than 24 hours."

Taking a more strategic look at the Corps's strategic value and chances of survival, former Marine Corps Commandant Lieutenant General Krulak noted, "The United States does not need a Marine Corps, the United States wants a Marine Corps."

It should come as no surprise, that Marines are over-represented in the ranks of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

When I joined the Marines, or rather the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) and took my oath of enlistment, I took it very seriously.

"Support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

I stopped to think about why the document was more important than the institution, and it naturally made sense to me. These are the rules by which we are able to ensure the rights of the people, this is what I want to have my life on the line for.

Of course, the Constitution is simply our best attempt (and I would argue among the best, if not the best created by any society in human history) to enshrine a set of greater values in a practical form of governance.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

This philosophy and these ideals were not anything particularly revolutionary in and of themselves, but when faced with the rejection of these ideals in the tyranny of King George III, the founding fathers were in a unique position to take a stand for those ideals.

It required a certain courage of them, but they sure as hell delivered! "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

The utopian ideal that comes from those principles is one that is void of the violation of those rights by any human against any other, or what some would call a state of anarchy. But out of the realities of the circumstance and the culture at the time, a practical form of governance was necessary, and naturally came the Constitution.

Although beautiful and powerful, this document that created and defined what Benjamin Franklin referred to as, "A republic, if you can keep it," was far from perfect.

Not only did our founders intend for us to keep it, but strive continuously to improve it, and it prescribed the exact means of amendment.

Along with the cultural evolution that makes change possible, we have been making great progress with our Constitutional Republic.

We have seen the abolition of slavery, a civil rights movement, and a women's movement, among many other great strides.

As a species, we have gone from the law of the jungle, to feudalism, to kingdoms, to empire, to capitalism with slavery, to capitalism with corporatism, but all in all, things are getting better.

Humanity marches on. You can fight it, or fight for it.

It wasn't too long ago that the best we could expect out of life was fondly referred to as, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." My oh my, how we have progressed as a species since then.

But even in America, it has been a process of two steps forward, one step back. And as a nation, we are progressing down many paths simultaneously. The founding of the federal reserve as not only unconstitutional, but creating unnatural, immoral concentrations of wealth, could be seen as a step backward begun in 1913 that is still with us today.

Within that time frame, there have been many steps forward, and many smaller steps backward.

Clearly, in this framework, the Bush Administration has had more than its fair share of steps backwards.

That is why this Independence Day is so desperately needed right now. We have forgotten the ideals put forth in Declaration. As the founders knew, a servile, unquestioning, obedient people, will always produce tyrants.

The mortal flaw of tyranny is that it is dependent upon the obedience of its subjects.

On this Independence Day we must renew our commitment to the ideals of the Declaration. It should be very clear to all patriotic Americans, that when in the course of human events, an oppression so revolts those subject to it, it becomes necessary to dissolve the political bands that are the means of that tyranny.

We must, as a nation, once again, embrace defiance, rebellion, and resistance!

Happy Independence Day . . . if you can live up to it.

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