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Iraq Veterans Against the War Calls for Immediate Withdrawal From Afghanistan

Whereas, Iraq Veterans Against the War is an organization that has opened its membership to veterans of the war in Afghanistan;

Whereas, the war in Afghanistan is continuing into its seventh year with rising casualties among the Afghan people, and with U.S. and Coalition forces facing their deadliest year since the invasion;

Whereas a primary motivation for the prolonged occupation of Afghanistan is competition between the U.S., Russia and China for control of oil and natural gas resources in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea;

Whereas, the military occupation is creating tension and resentment among the Afghan people, to include Afghan women, many of whom are calling for the removal of all foreign occupying troops;

Whereas, the Afghanistan war dehumanizes the Afghan people and denies them their right to self-determination;

Whereas, our military is being exhausted by involuntary extensions, and activations of the Reserve, National Guard and Individual Ready Reserve, and by repeated deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan;

Whereas, service members are facing serious health consequences due to our government's negligence in Iraq and Afghanistan and mismanagement of the Department of Veterans Affairs;



PRES. OBAMA'S AFGHANISTAN PLAN IN ACTION:

The casket of Air Force Staff Sgt. Phillip Myers, of Hopewell, Va., killed in Afghanistan on April 4, arrives April 5, 2009 at Dover Air Force Base, Del. (AP)

Whereas, there is no battlefield solution to terrorism, and any escalation of the war in Afghanistan will only serve to exacerbate the plight of the Afghan people, destabilize the region, and further the breakdown of our military;

Therefore, be it resolved that Iraq Veterans Against the War calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces in Afghanistan and reparations for the Afghan people, and supports all troops and veterans working towards those ends.



Why I'm Against Obama's Afghanistan

By Benjamin Lewis

Marine Benjamin Lewis served two tours in Iraq and was honorably discharged in 2007. Recently, he received notification that he was a candidate to be recalled to active duty. A few weeks ago at a Winter Soldier event in Portland, Oregon, Lewis publicly announced his intention to refuse reactivation from the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). Here we reprint his April 9, 2009 statement from Alternet:

I am a veteran of Iraq who served two tours in the U.S. occupation of that country. I experienced firsthand the horrors of that war, and like many others, came to see it as nothing more than a chance for a very few to make vast profits in a short amount of time. Now, because of those selfish and irresponsible actions, the citizens of not only the U.S., but of the entire world, are asked to pay for the fallout of war in blood, sacrifice and currency.

But this is old news.

Yet, even as we deplore the war in Iraq and the unconstitutional actions of the former administration, we are sucked back into the propaganda of the 'first war,' the 'good war,' as if the Bush administration was so unpatriotic that it had no interest in Afghanistan. Even as we acknowledge that Iraq is a war for oil and profit, we ignore the history of Afghanistan and the oil resources of the Caspian Sea that would be opened up through this conquest. Even as we sit on the brink of a depression we are willing to pour our money and resources into a so-called 'ten year plan' that will cost unknown sums of money that we will not get back. Exactly as it is happening in the Iraq war, the fruits of our labor will be siphoned off into the banks of contractors and industrialists, and for whose benefit? Certainly not ours, for we have only some false hope of revenge to attain.

If it was not evident before, it should be apparent by now that Obama is not our savior. He does not bring us hope of no war and he certainly is either not able or not willing to bring about real change. He is, above all, one thing: a politician, and as such he is bound by the rules of his trade. That is his livelihood, so his career rests not on the energized citizens who, inflated with the jingoism of his campaign, rushed to the phones and then to the ballot box in support of his campaign, but by his financial backers, who are already reaping the benefit of 'bailouts' and a newly resurrected war. And if anything is transparent it is that Obama's administration plans to use the same bully tactics that the Bush administration used in order to subvert the will of the electorate and secure the interests of a very few while the rest of us struggle in a recession.

Yet he was elected on a 'no war' ticket and in this, if we know our history, he is no different than Woodrow Wilson who pulled America into World War I against the wishes of his constituency and later admitted that it was only for the benefit of capitalists. Obama stood shamelessly behind podiums and promised an end to the Iraq War, all the while planning to launch us into the good and just war against Afghanistan -- a nation that is really not one nation at all, but a heterogeneous population of many languages, tribes and cultures.

Even several of the Obama supporters I know cringed at his recent announcement of his ten-year plan in Afghanistan, a horrific declaration of war that boasts no objective other than training and arming a foreign military that supports the United States to protect U.S. corporate interests in Asia. Here again we see the despicable logic of building large armies in the name of peace. Perhaps more perturbing is the fact that our 'new' government is still insistent on abusing the rights of young men and women by duping them into military service.

As a veteran facing and refusing recall orders back into the Marine Corps, I am appalled by the notion that many support the war in Afghanistan, referring to it as the good war. As if any war is good. Still, even against their own interests, people cannot seem to see past the obvious façade that is the endless "war on terror." Afghanistan is one of the most unstable countries in the world. Its population is diverse, its mountainous territory virtually impenetrable. The region

has been sought after by outsiders for as long as there has been conquest, and not once has a force succeeded in occupying the terrain. The people of the United States look at that country as a singular entity, but in truth there are vast political differences in that region. To increase military force in Afghanistan will be as destabilizing in the region as the U.S. support for Israel has been farther west. And, as we have seen in Iraq, our enemies there will only increase. Solutions to global problems do not reside in bombs, retribution and revenge. They grow from supporting the many peaceful causes in the region and by uprooting instead of propagating war. For our brothers and sisters in that region are people just like us. They ask for solidarity and we send in the Marines. They ask for aid and we give them conditions.

I have refused to return to military 'service' because doing so would be a disservice to this country. For all that money should belong to the people, and not to the military industrial complex and those it benefits. For all that money could reduce hunger and poverty and thus subvert war. Though the events of 9/11 were horrific, do we justify them by becoming terrorists ourselves? Or do we move forward, admit and amend the mistakes of our past, and set our sites on peace and prosperity for all the world?

Veterans Protest Operation No Change

3.21.09 Xinhua

Although the size of anti-war demonstrations is shrinking in the United States, a group of veterans has become more visible in the crowd of demonstrations.

The group, known as Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), has been actively involved in a series of protests to mark the sixth anniversary of the Iraq in recent days.

Dressed in black T-shirts and military Khaki pants, the group's presence is evident among thousands of anti-war protesters who took part in the rally in Washington D.C. Saturday.

The veterans erected a makeshift "watch tower" on the ground and posted a big banner on it, which says "Operation no change," a critical expression of President Barack Obama's new plans for Iraq.

On March 19, the group launched a 24-hour vigil or demonstration across the White House, the first anti-war protest in Washington D.C. on this Iraq war's anniversary.

The IVAW, founded in 2004 and headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has about 1,600 members with 53 chapters, including those in overseas U.S. military bases.

The organization advocates immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq and full benefits for war veterans.

"What Obama is doing with our foreign policy on a fundamental level is not change. Though we are going to re-label the troops non-combat troops, they are still out there," argued Adam Kokesh, a prominent figure of the IVAW.

Kokesh, a decorated former Marine served in Iraq, made his name by interrupting John McCain's speech accepting the Republican nomination for president hopeful on Sept. 4 last year by yelling anti-war slogans in the audience.

He does not endorse the policy of McCain's Democratic opponent Obama, either.

Obama has been known for his opposition to the Iraq war and won staunch support from anti-war activists in last year's presidential election.

However, his decision last month to pull out all U.S. combat troops in 18 months, three months later than the timetable he promised during the campaign, was not well received among the anti-war crowds.

In particular, they criticized him for keeping a large presence of 50,000 non-combat troops in Iraq beyond August 2010 and planning to increase troop levels in Afghanistan.

"Any occupation is a crime," another IVAW member, Mike Mlekowski, told Xinhua.

"No war is better than any other war. Russians have failed in Afghanistan and I don't see any reason how can we work out there after the disaster in Iraq," he said.

"While the people in America lose their jobs and homes, the government still plans to spend billions of U.S. dollars into another war. This is not what I want," said Kyle Singh, another IVAW member who had been in Iraq for two years.

"I also feel sorry for the Iraqi people. Their lives haven't been any better after the invasion," he said.

Some IVAW members voiced concerns and frustrations of their lives after returning from Iraq.

One of them is Floyd Holt from Connecticut, who remains unemployed and struggles to feed his young family. He has an 8-month son and his wife is recently pregnant again.

"I am feeling bad. We fought a wrong war and we don't get due compensations," he said.

Like many of the soldiers who served in Iraq, Holt was diagnosed with PTSD or the post traumatic stress disorder, which affects 20 percent of the veterans returning from Iraq according to official estimate.

Holt said he hasn't received any treatment or compensation for his disease from the government.

"Sometimes I have bad dreams about horrible things I saw in Iraq. I may regret for fighting the war but I won't regret for joining the anti-war cause," he said.

Love, Dad

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

Son, we can't send you
any packages
like we have sent you before
because the shop
that I worked for for 27 years
has just went bankrupt
my pension money is gone
didn't get severance pay
after all those years
and I would have to pay
Cobra for health care but
I don't have money for that
they didn't even give me
my vacation pay
they gave me nothing
nothing at all
I took our savings and paid off
our home but now all I get is
unemployment checks
and food stamps
that will stop in months
I don't know what I will do then,
I'm old and nobody will hire me
but even the young
can't find any jobs
Soon they will take our car
turn off electricity
and turn off the heat
Son, I know you have troubles
of your own in Iraq
but I think you are fighting
the wrong enemy over there
I think all of you should come home
fight the government
the corporations
and defend us from
the bill collectors
kill the white shirt bank criminals
the oil company criminals
kill all the Madoff's
that have taken over our country
because nothing works
over here anymore.
Love, Dad

Out of the Frying Pan Into the ... Other Frying Pan



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