



VETERANS FOR PEACE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By David Cline

It has been six months since the Bush administration invaded Iraq. In that time, many of the justifications for war have been shown to be misrepresentations, distortions and lies.

With many others, Veterans For Peace worked hard to prevent this war. Despite our best efforts, we now find our troops occupying Iraq. Every day American G.I.s and Iraqi citizens continue to be killed and maimed.

We addressed this situation head-on at the 18th VFP National Convention last August in San Francisco. Over 400 veterans and supporters attended workshops on topics and issues to raise our voices against war and militarism. Nearly forty resolutions were passed covering Korea, Colombia, Depleted Uranium, Vietnam reconciliation, VA Healthcare, nuclear weapons, recognition of Merchant Marine service, etc. They are posted on our website and available from the national office.

Our Friday night banquet speakers, William Rivers Pitt and Congressmen Jim McDermott (himself a VFP member), spoke eloquently against the war and the occupation of Iraq and were broadcast on CSPAN.

Dennis Kucinich (a presidential candidate) addressed the convention the next morning.

Resolutions

One particularly significant resolution called for VFP to sponsor the Bring Them Home Now! campaign, with Military Families Speak Out and other veterans organizations. This campaign has begun to play an impor-

TWO YEARS LATER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By Wilson (Woody) Powell

On September 9, 2001, Lee Vander Laan arrived at the St. Louis World Community Center with VFP packed into a Ryder rental truck. On September 11 - well, we all know about that.

The first year raced by as we tried to keep up with fast-moving events, at the same time learning our jobs at a very fundamental level. We were able to triple our active membership in that period. As our base broadened, so did our credibility as a recognized authority on issues relating to militarism and the costs of war.

Coming into our own

Year two has seen a big leap in general visibility in the media, and other P & J organizations. Speaker requests flow in every week from all over the country. We always have a willing volunteer with exactly the right message. Due, in part, to the impetus of nationally televised events, we have become much better

known within the communities our chapters serve. Our website, thanks to Jozef Hand-Boniakowski and Lee Vander Laan, earns a constant stream of commentary from media people, as well as casual web surfers, about its informative excellence.

Nation-wide exposure

Both Operation Direct Distress and the San Francisco convention were faithfully recorded by C-Span. The result has been a steady increase of invitations to give public comment on radio and TV. We are fast becoming "regulars" on several programs, local and national in

Veterans For Peace with Military Families Speak Out and VAIW coalition will form the lead contingent of a
MASS MARCH ON WASHINGTON, DC,
Saturday, October 25, 2003.

The message

- BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW! -

End the occupation of Iraq

Invest in People - Not war

We urge all members, who can, to come and swell our ranks. Bring your banners and your bodies.

We expect echoing demonstrations and marches to occur in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other major cities. Watch for announcements.

Plan ahead.

(Organizing by United For Peace & Justice and A.N.S.W.E.R.)

tant role in reaching military families concerned about their loved ones. Support from active duty servicemen and women is increasing.

Another added a new plank to our Statement of Purpose; to "seek justice for veterans and victims of war". This addressed what many thought was a major blind spot in the original statement and reflects what chapters and members are doing routinely.



VFP member Craig Corrie and his wife, Cindy, at the National Convention in San Francisco.

Photo by Michael McPhearson

This year's convention was a milestone, marking major growth in VFP numbers and significance. The California chapters did a remarkably well-organized job. Special thanks go to George Johnson, Paul Cox, Steve Morse, Eric Johansson for their thoughtful leadership - and to Sharon Kufeldt, Becky Luening, Keith Mather, and countless others for their time, energy and resourcefulness in accomplishing the near-impossible.

The 2004 convention will be held in the Boston area (just prior to the Democratic convention) I encourage all members to start planning their participation now. This year's gathering set a high bar to match but I'm confident that next year's will be even better.

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Congressman Jim McDermott at the VFP National Convention in San Francisco.

Photo by Michael McPhearson

ED's report continued from page 1

scope. We are the people to ask for comments on recruiting, guerilla warfare, casualty counts, battlefield exposures, to name a few hot topics.

After the convention, the *Bring Them Home Now!* campaign kicked off in DC and invitations to comment on radio and TV spiked even higher. We received calls from across the USA as well as Australia, Germany, Great Britain and Japan. The Nation magazine ran an article about VFP, and William Rivers Pitt, a convention keynoter, published one of his own on Truthout.org.

MEMBERSHIP AND CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

Membership is over 3300 paid members as of this writing. Over the last four months, members have been joining at a rate of 100 per month and climbing. The more members we have the more points of contact we develop, the more members we attract.

New chapters are springing up in all parts of the country; Michigan, Wisconsin, South Carolina, Nevada, California, Washington State, North Carolina, Southern Indiana and Central Connecticut. Texas is coming on very strong, largely due to the efforts of Dick Underhill out of Austin. Dick has made contact with members throughout the state and is working to establish chapters in eight distinct communities. Since Texas is so big, Dick may well be pioneering the concept of regional organization.

FINANCIALS

Our new, board-approved, budget of \$148,000 for fiscal year 2003-2004 is approximately half again as much as last year's of \$98,000. We are solvent, and will soon achieve a prudent six months reserve for operating funds. Dues accounted for most of our income. Donations came next - and I should point out that donations are mostly from members. We received only \$11,000.00 in outside funding from two foundations this year.

Merchandise sales have surprised us with a much stronger performance than anticipated, (\$25,000 vs. \$3,600 budgeted). We will build on that success with additional products in the coming months.

Dues for fiscal year 2003-2004 were due September 1, 2003.

NEXT YEAR

A new Board of Directors

A new board will be elected from a ballot to be issued in October, and will take its seat in January, in Tampa, Florida. Excellent people have stepped forward to serve. Your choices will not be easy ones. Be sure you have paid your dues and are eligible to vote.

Communications

Our core activities are education and COMMUNICATION. Accordingly, we have set up a Communications Committee to manage outreach activities, including this newsletter, a journal, television production, websites, and general communications improvement between chapters and National. You will be hearing much more from and about them.

Wilson Powell, ED

MILITARY FAMILIES AGAINST THE WAR

Stan Goff: Bring the troops home now

By Dave Lindorff

Millions of Americans are anxious about and even opposed to the American war on Iraq and to the bloody occupation that has followed it. But for Stan Goff, it's personal.

A career soldier and Vietnam veteran, Goff is an organizer of Bring Them Home Now, a fledgling movement of hundreds of relatives of U.S. troops in Iraq who say their family members in uniform are being made to fight an illegal and immoral war.

Goff is also the parent of one of those soldiers, a son who just last month was sent into Iraq to work as an army mechanic. "My son wrote an e-mail back that he's already been under attack by mortars twice," says Goff.

Bring Them Home Now is the combined project of two anti-war organizations—Military Families Speak Out and Veterans for Peace—and has seen its membership soar to more than 700 families over the course of the Iraq war. Because its members have relatives at risk in that conflict, the group poses perhaps one of the biggest threats to the Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld war axis in Washington.

In These Times spoke with the now-retired Master Sergeant Goff by phone at his office with North Carolina Waste Awareness and Reduction Network, an environmental organization based in Durham.

What has the response been to an organization of anti-war soldiers' families?

Since I got out of the army in 1996, I've never seen anything catch fire like this. It sort of started out with that idiotic comment by George Bush in early July taunting the Iraqi guerrillas with the phrase "Bring 'em on." I wrote a piece condemning that statement in Counterpunch and got thousands of responses to it. Forty percent of them were veterans or military families, and they overwhelmingly supported my criticism of Bush. This is especially impressive because a lot of military families feel that there is a risk in speaking out.

What are they afraid of?

Soldiers in uniform do not have the First Amendment freedom to criticize their superior officers about war-related matters, and that goes right up to the Commander-in-Chief. The families, of course, have their First Amendment freedom, but the reality is that the officer and enlisted personnel management systems control a soldier's career, and they can be extremely subjective. One bad line in your file can ruin your career.

Why are we seeing such a movement among military families with this conflict?

We're not saying bring the troops home because they're suffering hardship and danger. Most soldiers know that hardship and danger are part of their job. What we're saying is bring the troops home because they are facing hardship and danger in a war that is immoral and illegal.

The thing is, most of the kids that are over there believed what they were told, that they'd be greeted as liberators, like the allies marching into Paris. Instead it was like marching into Mogadishu. So now they and their families are asking why are they there subjecting themselves to 120 degree temperatures and daily attacks if [Iraqis] don't want them there?

Are you being harassed by the government? Do you worry that you will be?

There are some people who try to call us whiners. But really there has been no official harassment. It would be incredibly foolish for the administration to retaliate against us. ... We have a sort of immunity from being charged with being bad Americans, and it's an identity we guard carefully.

Do you feel like this is Vietnam all over again?

In some ways it's similar, and in some ways it's very different. The terrain is different, and you don't have the Cold War underlying it, though the Bush Administration seems to be trying hard to create a new global enemy like that.

What is happening that is similar is that, in order to limit the casualties, which are raising the level of concern at home, the Pentagon has essentially shut down all operations. The troops have been pulled back behind the wire into hardened bases. The problem with that is that when you pull back, you hand the countryside over to the enemy, and then the static positions set you up as targets, which are under surveillance by the guerrillas.

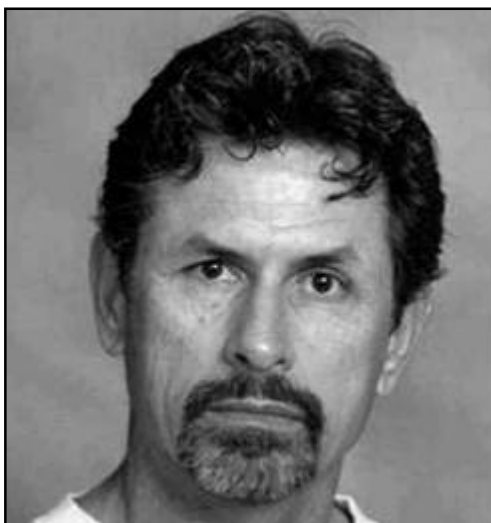
It's a classic no-win situation for the United States now, with the Iraqis executing a classic guerrilla strategy of going after the softer targets like the United Nations and the pipelines, and I frankly don't see how we get out of it.

That sounds pretty pessimistic.

I'm an optimist really, though. Maybe a short-term pessimist but a long-term optimist. You know, the government can spin, spin, spin, like with U.S. occupation coordinator L. Paul Bremer saying over and over that we're "turning the corner." But eventually reality reasserts itself.

I think that the Bush Administration will collapse from its own hubris. You know, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, is not the smart guy people in the media say he is. He is a fool who thinks he's smarter than his generals. He has an outrageous faith in technology's ability to solve military problems, and he seems to have Bush firmly in tow. But they're in a box. They're in the process of self-destruction.

The problem is that when it's over, we'll have a whole bunch of damaged people coming home sick, lame, and crazy. All I want is for my son to come home in the same condition that he left in.



Vietnam veteran and VFP member Stan Goff organizes the Bring Them Home Now! campaign.

POTOMAC WATCH

By Robert Graybill

I saw in the newspaper today that Congress came back into session. I was afraid they were going to do that.

-Will Rogers

The 108th Congress reconvened on Sept. 3 after its annual month-long recess, and while its personnel remained the same, in some respects this congress is much different from the one that went home at the end of July. Support for Bush's war is showing definite signs of erosion in all national polls. Even approval ratings for the president himself have tumbled more than 20 points since his televised Top Gun charade on TV. Add to that the news that the government deficit will top \$500 billion next year and the U.S. economy has forever lost 2.7 million manufacturing jobs and you now find that congressional Republicans are as nervous as a faith healer with appendicitis. Senate Democrats will be able to cash in on this new situation better than their counterparts in the House, which is still under the strong thumb of the rightwingers; but in both houses, Republicans who must stand for re-election next year are beginning to question blind adherence to the policies of Bush II. How that will play out in close votes remains to be seen.

The sharpest battle will take place over the **\$87 billion supplemental appropriation** that Bush asked for in a nationally televised speech on Sept. 7. As of this writing (Sept. 15) the

appropriation bill, which will fund the continued occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan through 2004, has not been formally introduced in the House. Nevertheless, Senate Democrats have already vowed to make the Bush Administration accountable for every penny it will spend. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) has announced he will draft an amendment to the bill that would cut off the funds if the administration does not tell Congress how it "will win the peace." In the House, Democrats have abandoned support of Henry Waxman's bill, "to establish an independent commission on intelligence about Iraq" (HR 2625), hoping instead to embarrass the Bushies when they come to the House hat in hand. While few doubt that Bush will get the

Once upon a time, the best way to contact your reps in congress was via snail-mail. That is no longer true. The anthrax scare has caused every piece of mail going to congress to be delayed while it is sniffed, poked, prodded, and scanned. E-mail is quick and convenient, but because every national lobbyist uses it, congressional offices are inundated with the stuff and staffers tend to ignore it. The best way to contact congress nowadays is via fax. (Unfortunately, a few members still do not have fax machines in their offices. In these cases, use the phone.) If you don't already know how to reach your congressperson or senators, go to www.house.gov or www.senate.gov.

\$87 billion, most observers agree the money won't be forthcoming until December. (Express your opinions to your congresspeople.)

The Senate will also be faced with passing a mountain of normal appropriations bills that the House finished in July. One controversial bill of interest to veterans is HR 2861, which **funds the Veterans Administration**. Republican leaders in Congress agreed in their Joint Budget Resolution last winter to fund the agency at \$64 billion for 2004, including a \$3.4 billion increase in veterans' health care. In the waning days of July, however, House Republicans, realizing the enormity of the budget deficit, trimmed it by \$1.8 billion. The bill has now been sent to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, which is chaired by Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA). Immense pressure will certainly be brought on the Senate by all veterans groups to restore the agreed-to funding. (Specter's fax: 202-228-1229.)

Other bills of interest to the VFP:

HCR 111, "**a bill expressing sympathy for Rachel Corrie**," who was recently elected an honorary VFP member at the national convention in August, was introduced by Brian Baird (D-WA). At the convention, the parents of Rachel Corrie, a young woman who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in April as she tried to stop the demolition of a Palestinian house, urged our members to lobby for the resolution's passage, adding that the bill would also call for an investigation into the circumstances surrounding their daughter's death. The bill is currently assigned to the House Committee on International Relations, Henry Hyde (R-IL), chair. (Fax: 202-225-1166).

Already dubbed "**Patriot Act II**," HR 3037, a bill introduced by Tom Feeney (R-FL) on Sept. 9, would permit the FBI and federal prosecutors to issue "administrative subpoenas" to gather evidence and compel testimony. While previously used in some civil cases, these subpoenas, which do not require the signature of a judge or the foreman of a grand jury, would mark the first time the government was willing to bypass the court system for criminal prosecutions. There is bipartisan opposition to the bill, though whether it is large enough to derail the measure remains to be seen. The bill is currently before the House Judiciary Committee, F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., (R-WI), chair. (Contact your congressperson and phone Sensenbrenner at 202-225-5101.)

Widespread concerns about the lack of accountability in computerized voting machines have led New Jersey Democrat Rush Holt to introduce the "**Amend Help America Vote Act**" (HR 2239). This bill would require computerized voting machines to produce a hardcopy of the completed ballot for each voter to review before recording the ballot. It would also require that voting software be made fraud-proof. The bill is presently before the House Committee on House Administration, Robert W. Ney (R-OH), chair. (Fax: 202-225-3394.)

Rep. Dennis Kucinich, who also spoke at the VFP annual convention, has introduced HR 1673, which would establish a **Department of Peace**, and H Res. 260, which would require Bush to produce documents and other materials in his possession on Iraq's WMD. The former has been referred to the House Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, Howard Coble (R-NC), chair. (Fax: 202-225-8798.) The second has been reported out of the House International Relations Committee unfavorably and is currently on the House calendar. (Contact your congressperson.)

Concerned that most of our soldiers and sailors come from

poor communities and represent the sons and daughters of the lower middle class, Rep. Charles Rangle (D-NY) and Sen. Fritz Hollings (D-SC) have introduced bills to **reinstate the draft**. No one would be exempt from military service, under these bills, except the physically and mentally impaired. The house version of this bill has been virtually tabled by referring it to the Pentagon for "executive comment." The Hollings version (S 89) is currently before the Senate Armed Services Committee, John Warner (R-VA), chair. (Fax: 202-224-6295.)

And now for something completely quixotic. Remember how some protesters during the Vietnam War refused to pay

that part of their income tax that would fund the military? Well, if Georgia Democrat John Lewis has his way, we could all do that-legally! Called the "**Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act**," HR 2037 would authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to create a separate pot in which to place the tax revenues of all people who have registered with him as being conscientious objectors to war. Funds flowing into this pot would then be distributed to all government agencies except the Pentagon. This bill is currently sitting in the House Ways and Means Committee, William Thomas (R-CA), chair. (Fax: 202-225-8798.)

VETERANS FOR PEACE MERCHANDISE



"War and Peace and Democracy," not to be confused with that earlier work by Tolstoy, is a slim 32-page pamphlet penned for those who agree with Smedley Butler that "war is a racket."

Written by VFP member, Mike Ferner, it contains four essays guaranteed to get you thinking about why we find ourselves in another war, and how our peacemaking needs to be rethought if we're to break this sad cycle.

Simply written and accessible enough to help even your brother-in-law understand why you go to all those demonstrations.

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CHAPTER NEWS

By Peter Shaw

Chapter Birth Announcement: Chapter 16 (DC Metro) has traditionally drawn members from the District, Northern Virginia and the Baltimore area. The chapter is about to split into a reorganized Chapter 16 and a new chapter in Baltimore. VFP President Dave Cline is traveling to Baltimore on September 24 to keynote a formational meeting. The next day Motivator Dave heads to DC to help get the reorganized Chapter 16 buzzing again. In the meantime, VFP-Baltimore took part in the second 9-11 anniversary memorial organized by Women In Black (Baltimore) in which thousands were stationed in vigil along a "Peace Path" stretching from the Inner Harbor to the city limits.

Chapter 1 (Portland, ME): As part of the chapter's "Bring Them Home Now!" campaign, members accompanied Patricia Finn of



VFP members attend rally at Lawrence Livermore Lab in California.

Photo by Joseph Farah

In August, the chapter organized a well attended peace convergence at the Bath Iron Works shipyard to protest the launching of an Aegis class destroyer on Nagasaki Day. Kathy Kelly of "Voices In The Wilderness" spoke, as did Liz McAlister, who was arrested in an act of civil disobedience at about the same moment her daughter Kate was at the San Francisco convention accepting the award of honorary membership in VFP for her dad and Liz's late husband Phil Berrigan.

Chapter 15 (Tallahassee, FL): While serving his sentence as an SOA Watch prisoner, Bud Combs, was stuck in solitary confinement for receiving published antiwar and related articles from the outside, which must have recast Bud as a dangerous subversive who had to be isolated immediately before the contamination spread. Who would have thought that could happen here in the land of free and the home of the brave....

Chapter 27 (Minneapolis/St. Paul): The chapter's latest newsletter has a detailed account of interacting with counter-protesters and laying counter-arguments on them. A quick peek at the chapter's website www.TwinCitiesVFP.org says the newsletter will be coming there "soon." Once the newsletter is up you can also read an interview with member Roy Wolff about his recent week-long trip to North Korea, just in case you missed his presentation at the VFP convention.

Chapter 31 (Philadelphia, PA): "Bring Them Home Now" is big on the chapter action agenda with an event in the town of Media, PA October 10 and 11 to coincide with Congressional votes on sending troops to Iraq, an action in Philly around Veterans Day and a contingent of "the usual suspects" at the DC action on October 25. The chapter is also getting into schools to set kids straight on the history of early US involvement in Vietnam, Iran, Guatemala, etc., while exploring the consequences of involvement for today's world. The Christian Science Monitor article reporting on this project appears in this issue.

"Military Families Speak Out" to a Democratic Party-sponsored pancake breakfast attended by Congressman Tom Allen. Pat, who has a daughter in Afghanistan and a son in Iraq, asked Allen to explain why the killing needs to continue and the quagmire deepen.

Chapter 32 (Sunrise, FL): VFP was present at a peace drumming on Hollywood Beach. Stan Goff gave a great presentation for VFP (would you expect otherwise?), and all sorts of folks were asking for info on VFP as a result. Chapter members, who are also union members or otherwise concerned, are gearing up for the FTAA protest in November. *Editor's comment: Chapter member Arnie Welber is recognized here for his role in nominating Rachel Corrie for VFP membership and introducing her parents at the VFP Convention, one of its most powerful moments.*

Chapter 34 (New York, NY): Chapter members staged a joint counter-recruitment drive with Military Families Speak Out, War Resisters League and others at an Army recruitment station at New York City's Coney Island on August 23. Folks held signs like "Support Our Troops, Bring Them Home," and passed out anti-war info and counter-recruitment brochures to the people who passed by. One guy (Coney Island Baby??) registered negative reaction, but otherwise the event went well and proved to be a good way to get VFP's anti-war message to the general public.

Chapter 39 (OH): Mike Ferner was one of a group of citizens arrested and charged with "disorderly conduct" for a peaceful sit-in at a Toledo military recruiting office two days before the US/UK invasion of Iraq. A trial is scheduled for September 23 during which the defense will be based on the existence of "competing harms and necessity." Simply put, the protesters' act of civil disobedience was necessary in order to prevent a greater harm-war in Iraq. Makes sense from here.

Chapter 43 (Columbia, MO): Under the leadership of Dwight Rieman, reason has prevailed again. For the second time the chapter has successfully fought off an attempt to install JROTC in the Columbia Public Schools. The chapter also has a weekly peace vigil outside the U.S. Post Office. There has been a noticeable decrease in hostility directed towards the vigil participants. Sounds like some people are having second thoughts about

GUILTY AS CHARGED

Below is a report from Terry Lodge, attorney for the 7 of us on trial this week, on charges stemming from a sit-down at a military recruiting station back on March 17--two days before Junior Bush invaded and bombed Iraq.

Terry's Report...

...the trial concluded yesterday. The jury was out for over 2 hours, but returned verdicts of guilty as charged against all 7 of the defendants. They were each fined \$75 and costs, which will be several hundred dollars due to the use of a jury (member of which are paid a token per diem amount), with suspended 10-day jail sentences.

Each of the 7 defendants testified splendidly as to why they did what they did on March 17. If the phrase "speaking truth to power" has any meaning, it found its flesh-and-blood manifestation yesterday afternoon. I cannot describe the strength and wisdom that emanated as each of the defendants took his or her turn at the witness stand and taught a dynamic lesson in the real meaning of citizenship. And on several occasions, the prosecutor tried to argue the inconvenience all this caused the community, when people could just as easily have shut up and just picketed on the sidewalk. At one point he accused Mike Ferner of the demonstrators' supposedly blocking the parking lot so no one could get to the Subway sandwich place in that strip mall, to which Ferner responded, "Perhaps that gave people food for thought." Bob Masters in an especially powerful passage retorted to the prosecutor's badgering ("you knew you were going to break the law, didn't you?") that "it's a little hard to find a higher law than 'thou shalt not kill.'"

Every one of the 7 spoke eloquently and brightly. I was honored to be associated with this controversy. **Terry**

PS: If you would like to make a contribution to help pay fines and costs, you can make out a check to Terry Lodge 316 N. Michigan, Toledo OH 43604, and indicate what it's for. Thank you.

Mike Ferner

The **Veterans For Peace Internet Website Committee** is looking for volunteers. The Committee is looking for those who are knowledgeable in putting up webpages, being responsible for and updating specific sections of the website, for example, the VFP In The News section, or, the Special Iraq section. We are also looking for volunteers who aren't necessarily knowledgeable in webpage product, but in organizing and simplifying the structure of the website and the pages.



their negativity.

Chapter 47 (Pittsburgh, PA): After a long snooze, the chapter is opening an eyelid and putting an eye on the onlooker crowd at the Pittsburgh Veterans Day parade. VFP "pazillas" will work the folks over by passing out literature among them and engaging them in "Bring Them Home Now" talk.

Chapter 49 (Indiana): On November 19 at the Indiana War Memorial in Indianapolis, the chapter is co-sponsoring with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation a free one-day workshop for educators on "Using Local War Memorials As Teaching Tools." The workshop is designed to help teachers communicate to their students about the different historical, cultural and political meanings contained in war memorials.

Chapter 54 (Santa Barbara, CA): Chapter President Dan Seidenberg, a combat infantryman and Purple Heart recipient in the Vietnam War, spoke at a POW/MIA Day recognition, organized by the Board of Supervisors of Santa Barbara. Dan, who is on 100% disability from his injuries, spoke on behalf of infantrymen in Vietnam, comprising as they do, a majority of the MIAs in the Vietnam War.

Chapter 55 (Santa Fe, NM): On September 11th, 2003, the chapter co-sponsored a 24 hour vigil at the New Mexico State Capitol in Santa Fe during which 14,342 names were read aloud by members of the community in remembrance of the innocent civilian lives lost in the tragedies of 9/11, the Afghanistan war and the invasion of Iraq. In conjunction with the reading, participants assembled a commemorative mosaic using three different colors of wooden pegs. One peg was placed into the mosaic as each name was read. There was also a walkway of panel displays with information addressing international and domestic peace and social justice issues, as well as a 60-foot vinyl Iraq Memorial Wall created by the Santa Fe Veterans for Peace with pictures and biographical notes on all the "coalition" dead in Iraq to date.

Chapter 61 (St. Louis, MO): Tom Sager, VFP Iraq Water Project program director, returned from a trip to Iraq to assess damage done in the recent war to plants previously repaired by the project. Some facilities were damaged either by munitions or looting, but all required maintenance. While strongly opposed to the U.S. occupation, the IWP has decided to keep faith with the Iraqi people and continue to raise money for further water system repairs. The chapter is working on its third of a series of public discussion forums.

Chapter 64 (Alabama): There's been some movement toward development of a regional alliance of VFP chapters in the Southeast. Email correspondence, exchange visits and joint events have brought members of chapters in Tennessee and Alabama, and some at-large members, into contact. Members from both Tennessee and Alabama are working with successors to recently-deceased Myer "PJ" Pettyjohn to re-activate the chapter at the state prison in Wartburg, TN. A broader get-together between members

from Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia and Florida is planned for the annual SOA demonstration at Ft. Benning in November.

Chapter 65 (Wyoming): Chapter leader Sissy Goodwin is setting up a Black Ribbon campaign to inform the public of the tragedy of war and the resulting needless deaths and mayhem, as well as the Bush Administrations' agenda of lies and corruption. The black ribbons will be tied on public property that has been decorated with familiar "acceptable" yellow ribbons. Sissy expects scorn and arrest, to which he is no stranger.

Chapter 71 (Sonoma County, CA): The chapter is waging peace, "one Veterans Building at a time" to gain free and equal access to the Santa Rosa Veterans building where other veterans organizations are already located. A first meeting there is set for October. The aim is to open up other veterans buildings throughout Sonoma county, maybe get "VFP" to roll off the lips as easily as "VFW." The chapter is participating in an area Stand Down to help homeless vets, and sending a contingent to Cuba around Veterans Day, among other activities.

Chapter 78 (Gainesville, FL): The chapter has had good success with fundraising over the years, and the success continues. The primary source is an annual Winter Solstice Concert, utilizing the talents of local musicians. Proceeds are used to fund not only the chapter but also other groups and their activities, including an alternative library and media and a Peace Camp. Publishing "War is a Racket" also provides funds which have put a number of hard-hitting books and videos into the county's seven high schools. Among the many demonstrations participated in by the chapter is a continued presence at the Kings Bay Trident Sub base.

Chapter 90 (Broome County, NY): There is lots of collaborative work going on here in the community and with other VFP chapters in New York, resulting is a good exchange of ideas and support of activity. The chapter has a presence at every local action and doesn't miss an opportunity to speak at local service clubs. There is a robust letters-to-the editor campaign as well as a coordinated letter writing and visitation program to local congresspeople.

Chapter 101 (San Jose Peninsula, CA): The chapter was formed this spring, largely through the tireless efforts of George Johnson. Memorial Day was first chapter event, with VFP highly visible distributing Flanders poppies. A July 4th parade followed with a VFP float featuring Country Joe MacDonald singin', crowds admirin' and an honor guard with roses stuck in rifle barrels. After co-hosting the VFP national convention the chapter hosted a fundraiser for conscientious objector Marine Stephen Funk and helped bring Jim Hightower to the area for a big event.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL – IMPORTANT!

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TELLING KIDS TO SAY 'NO' TO WAR

[*Christian Science Monitor*] from the September 16, 2003 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0916/p13s02-lecl.html>

By Marjorie Coeyman / Staff writer of *The Christian Science Monitor*

PHILADELPHIA - John Grant and Frank Corcoran have both been restless this summer, eagerly awaiting the reopening of school. Yet the two men are not teachers and they are not students. Nor are they parents of school-age children. Rather, they are Vietnam vets with a message they long to bring into schools and share with a younger generation.

The essence of that message: Don't be sucked into believing in notions of war as glorious and patriotic. War is an evil to be avoided at all costs.

Military recruiters and government advertising often dominate access to schools and tell teens the opposite, Mr. Grant says. That's why servicemen who have fought need to tell them the truth.

"In ads, you see out-of-work actors on helicopters," he says, shaking his head. "But that's not what it's really like. We've got to go out there and tell them that."

Grant and Mr. Corcoran are both members of the St. Louis-based Veterans For Peace. The group was founded in the mid-1980s by two veterans, one who had fought in World War II, and the other a Vietnam vet. It sees its purpose as debunking false notions of war as glorious, and alerting the world - particularly those who have never fought - to what they see as the stark and horrible reality of combat.

Part of its credo reads: "We find it sad that war seems so delightful, so often, to those that have no knowledge of it. We will proudly and patriotically continue to denounce war despite whatever misguided sense of euphoria supports it."

Governments want young people to believe that war is necessary, the group believes, but that is rarely - if ever - true. Some members of VFP are pacifists, while others believe war may be necessary to counter aggression. But most agree that the US government has - at least at times - waged war unnecessarily. And they would like young people, particularly the potential enlistees, to examine the reasons for war much more critically than they are encouraged to.

Schools aren't the only channel of outreach of VFP, but they are an important one, says David Cline, president of the group. "It's one of our mainstay activities, especially for the Vietnam vets," he says. "We're trying to pass our experience on to our children and the younger generation."

But the group's forays into schools are limited partly by its small size (they have only 3,500 members nationwide), and partly by resistance from schools.

"There are teachers who want their students to hear another point of view," Mr. Cline says. But many are uncomfortable with bringing into the classroom a message that may seem not only antiwar but possibly even antigovernment.

Grant and Corcoran, who both live in the Philadelphia area, like to work together, and over the past several years have carried their antiwar message into middle schools, high schools, and both community and four-year colleges.

But since the US invasion of Iraq, they have felt an additional sense of urgency about getting into schools. Their main con-

cern: Military recruiters have become more active in schools and may be filling students' heads with false notions of war as a patriotic duty. They say they know how vulnerable teens may be to such a message because they themselves were once seduced by it.

Grant grew up in a family that expected all males to serve in the military. He enlisted in the Army in the 1960s right after high school graduation and was sent to Vietnam. He was in radio intelligence and served his tour of duty without questioning his core conviction that he was doing something noble.

Later in life, however, he began to read about that era of US history and "the scales fell from my eyes," he says today. "The idea that we were liberating people, that it was about democracy ... it was never really that."

He came to believe that the Vietnam War had really been fought to achieve political dominance, something he felt could not justify the killing that he had witnessed.

Corcoran's experience was even harsher.

He enlisted in the Marines at age 18, at the height of the Vietnam war. What he saw when he arrived overseas to begin his service he can only characterize now as "slaughter." His notions of patriotism and glory faded almost instantly, he says. "All that stuff is gone in six weeks. All you're thinking about is survival."

Corcoran hadn't served long before he was caught in a prolonged gun battle during which his two best friends were killed. Both were shot after they crawled to a dangerous spot in an effort to save his life when he was shot in the stomach.

Corcoran says it was 20 years before he could talk about the incident, but now that he has started he wants to tell the story as often as he can. "Every time I tell I make Michael and Danny's deaths less senseless," he says.

Although Grant and Corcoran find that it is often hard to get permission to go into schools, once they get there, the greeting is usually a warm one. Most students - and many teachers - thank them profusely after their talk. "Many students say, 'I had no idea. Thank you for telling us the truth,'" Corcoran says.

And at least one teacher thanked him for arousing more compassion in his students. He says their first response to events in Iraq had been to chant "Nuke them, nuke them," but after listening to Corcoran and Grant explain firsthand how war felt, they were both saddened and subdued.

One reason VFP members hope students will take them seriously is that it is hard to challenge their heroism. Cline, for instance, served as an infantryman in Vietnam, was wounded three times, and received both a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. He is today disabled as a result of the war wounds.

Cline, in fact, feels so strongly about the need to educate people about the realities of military service that he also supports veterans who want to go into schools and urge students to enlist.

"The whole idea of vets coming in and sharing their experiences with young people is always important, even when it's the rah-rah stuff," he says.

But the purpose of VFP, he adds, is that "we have a responsibility to make sure young people hear both sides of the story."

VFP MEMBERS ATTEND UN CONFERENCES

By Ellen Barfield, vice-president of Veterans For Peace

September is the season for conferences at the United Nations, and VFP has had a good presence there recently. Primary VFP UN representative and national vice-president Ellen Barfield was the only VFP attendee at the UN Conference in Support of the Palestinian People, September 4 and 5, since the notice was quite short. It was good to get VFP included in the list of NGO's which care about Palestine, and hear powerful speakers on the issues.

Jeff Halper with the Israeli Coalition Against House Demolitions said he thought Israel would never leave Palestinian territories, so it is now an issue of ending the apartheid separation, opening up the Palestinian bantustans, and achieving one person one vote-the One State solution.

He may very well be right, but many activists who have worked years for a Palestinian state were angered by his statement and vehemently argued for pushing harder for a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.

His Excellency Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the UN, mentioned the numerous UN resolutions Israel continues to break, and suggested perhaps formally removing Israel from the UN General Assembly as it does NOT represent the Occupied Territories.

Cindy Corrie, the mother of Rachel Corrie, who was crushed trying to defend a Palestinian house in Gaza from an Israeli bulldozer, said, "Activists needing to do what they do is an indictment of International Society not having done what they should."

A hot topic at the conference was the wall Israel is building well inside Palestinian territory, in some cases isolating whole Palestinian villages between the 1967 "Green Line" border of Israel and the wall, or barricading villagers from their fields or water source. The land used for the barrier itself, the "Expansion Wall" as Nasser Al-Kidwa called it, is as wide as 8 traffic lanes, and can be seen from space like the Great Wall of China according to excellent commentator Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies.

The conference ended with the plan to call for a week of international actions against the wall from November 9-16.

The following week seven VFP representatives attended the UN Department of Public Information NGO Annual Conference on 8-10 September. This was the first year in a long time that a VFP delegation, instead of just the chief and assistant representatives, attended, and there was a waiting list of others who wanted to come. Those attending were Ellen Barfield and Harold Burbank, VFP UN reps, national board members Wayne Wittman and Bob Heberle, and members Jozef Hand-Boniakowski, Dave Tucker, and Jim Gallagher. Several other VFP members also attended representing other organizations.

The list of NGO's affiliated with the UN has grown in recent years, and the DPI/NGO conference may just about have outgrown the UN buildings. Getting all 3500 attendees

through security for the opening plenary in the General Assembly Hall was a nightmare, and double-booked workshop rooms led to some ugly arguments.

The plenary sessions were panels of high international people addressing various aspects of the conference theme, "Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the UN", with opportunities for written audience questions at the end. The long sessions were occasionally enlivened by some hard-hitting commentaries about international affairs.

Shashi Tharoor, the UN Under-Secretary for Communications, commented that on the same day 2700 or so people died at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11/2001, disrupting the DPI/NGO conference that year, 27,000 died around the world from hunger and preventable diseases. Later he said he had always thought that human rights began with breakfast.

Disappointingly, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan did not give his planned address, and no explanation was given. Other expected speakers had US visa approval denied or delayed.

In a panel on Sustainable Development, Jocelyn Dow, with Red Thread in Guyana called the Washington "consensus" of the economic dominators of the world a vampire, and said the Caribbean has been corporately globalized for 500 years. She called for not only sustainable, but also sustaining, development, before she departed to return to Cancun for the WTO conference (which has since seen a revolt of the underdeveloped nations, including Guyana no doubt, against the dominance of the rich nations.)

The mid-day workshops were of varying quality, but all seemed to be much narrower in focus than in years past. Many were presented by only one NGO organization, instead of a sharing of ideas and projects from several groups or even a round-table discussion of projects by all the workshop attendees, as had been the case in prior years.

Wayne Wittman offered thanks to VFP for the opportunity to represent our organization, and said our VFP presence was well received by the other delegates. Jozef Hand-Boniakowski felt privileged to be a VFP delegate where thousands of people from all over the planet gather in the hope of working for a less violent and war-plagued globe. Jewel Johnson, a VFP member but attending the conference as a United Church of Christ delegate, mentioned having been at these conferences since 1993, and being glad to see VFP well represented.

At an impromptu discussion among the VFP delegates we decided to put together a workshop when the request for proposals goes out for next year's conference. We were excited by the idea of asking other nation's peace veterans to join us to present an overview of veteran projects working for peace and justice around the world.

For more information about VFP UN work, contact Ellen Barfield at ellene4pj@yahoo.com.

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Three dates to prepare for

Now we are faced with how to respond in the coming months to a growing quagmire. There are three action dates to focus on:

October 10-16, is the one year anniversary of Congressional betrayal, when the US House of Representatives voted 296 to 133 to approve Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Iraq. The following day the Senate approved the same resolution by a vote of 77 to 23. Then on 10/16, George W. Bush signed it as Public Law 107-243 — a blank check for an unjustified and unnecessary war.

As we approach this anniversary, the administration is asking for another \$87 billion. Republican House leader Tom Delay has said “I see this as a second resolution on the war”. Our Response: Working with Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), we are putting together delegations to visit local Congressional offices to express our views on the additional monies being sought and why our troops should be brought home. This effort is being coordinated through the national office in St. Louis.

Saturday October 25 is the date set for mass mobilizations in Washington, DC and San Francisco, CA. We are working with United for Peace and Justice (of which VFP is a member) and International ANSWER.. We expect to have military families and veterans as a lead contingent in the DC march. We urge you to make every effort to join us.

Before the Iraq war millions marched in the streets of America and around the world. Since the invasion, however, there has been a less visible public outcry. Recent polls show half the American people

don't think it was worth going to war in Iraq. It is time to get back in the streets *en masse* and raise our voices again, sending an unmistakable message to the world that we are not subservient to these disastrous policies.

November 11, Veterans Day. Originally it was called Armistice Day when on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, the guns went silent, ending the slaughter called “war to end all wars”. Since then it has become a day to recognize the service and sacrifice of America's veterans. Today, with veterans healthcare being cut and the number of disabled veterans from Iraq is growing, we have a duty to expose this shameful treatment and to speak out in opposition to continued occupation and war. I hope that all VFP chapters will discuss, plan and take actions they deem appropriate to commemorate Veterans Day.

In closing, I think we should reflect on the words of General David Shoup, former US Marine Commandant and Medal of Honor recipient who in 1966 said, “I believe that if we would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-soaked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution on their own.....And if unfortunately their revolution must be of the violent type because the ‘haves’ refuse to share with the ‘have-nots’ by any peaceful method, at least what they get will be their own and not the American style, which they don't want and above all don't want crammed down their throats by Americans.”



David Cline, President

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