

Rally to Support Rep. John Conyers and AfterDowningStreet.org

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Remarks by
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Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) delivers 540,000 signatures to the White House

Working as a Navy Corpsman during the Vietnam War, I took care of hundreds of young men who came home minus their arms and legs and sight and sanity. Unlike the fortunate sons who became today's powerful elite, working class kids of that generation were not able to claim "other priorities" to keep them out of the meat grinder. Many learned too late how to quit being good soldiers. So if my words today, spoken as young men and women die again for empire, sound a little sharp, I hope you will understand.

Not long after the last election, you may recall a reporter asking quintessential fortunate son, George W. Bush, about accountability for the disaster in Iraq. The presidential reply, in that smarmy, lipless smirk was, "We just had an accountability moment. It was called the election."

In a growing number of cities across the nation, Veterans For Peace chapters are creating and displaying mini Arlington Cemeteries – neat rows of white crosses or tombstones – one for each U.S. soldier killed in Iraq.

Together with our local peace group, my wife and I worked on "Arlington at Toledo," painting about 300 tombstones in our kitchen. A few Saturdays ago, we started putting labels on them with the name, rank, and age of each G.I. killed. As we sat on our living room floor, surrounded by stacks of tombstones representing so many young men and women, we listened to an old Dire Straits album. The track titled, "Brothers in Arms" came on with these telling lines: "Every man has to die/But it's written in the starlight/And in every line on your palm/We're fools to make war on our brothers in arms."

Sue looked at the tombstone she was labeling with a 19 year-old's Private's name and dissolved into sobs crying, "He was someone's baby..."

We are here today to lift up the work of the congressional patriots who participated in Congressman Conyers' hearing on the Downing Street minutes. We are here to congratulate and expand the work of the AfterDowningStreet.org Coalition as it publicizes the truth about this administration's invasion of Iraq. We are here today to tell George W. Bush and his gang of criminals that their day of accountability for slaughtering

someone's baby – Iraqi or American – is yet to come!

Veterans For Peace is part of the AfterDowningStreet.org Coalition because we agree that the truth must be exposed and publicized. We agree that the logical next step is for the House of Representatives to consider a Resolution of Inquiry into possible impeachable offenses.

We believe that these are important steps; important but only preliminary. That's why, on the second anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Veterans For Peace sent a letter to every member of the U.S. House and Senate demanding that George W. Bush be impeached!

VFP is calling for Bush's impeachment because – and this is important to understand – Article VI, par. 2 of the U.S. Constitution clearly states that when the Senate adopts an international treaty it becomes part of the supreme law of the land, the same as an Act of Congress. This means that as Bush daily violates treaties and international laws he simultaneously violates federal law.

We are calling for George Bush's impeachment for violating treaties such as the Nuremberg Principles, thereby committing what are clearly defined as "crimes against peace...crimes against humanity...and war crimes."

...for initiating and continuing to this day what the U.N. Charter – also legally binding on the U.S. – defines as a war of aggression...

...for clearly and specifically violating the Geneva Conventions – also legally binding on the U.S. regardless of what Mr. Bush says about them – by torturing and killing prisoners, purposely targeting civilians, preventing delivery of medical relief...ALL of which are violations of the U.S. War Crimes Act of 1996.

Veterans For Peace is calling for impeachment because it our responsibility as citizens to do so. The words of a village sheik I spoke with in Iraq last year haunt me every day. Even as he assured me that he recognized the difference between the government and the people of the United States, he asked, "But you say you live in a democracy. How can this be happening to us?"

It is not only our responsibility as citizens, but as a Veterans For Peace member put it, it is our sworn duty to uphold the Constitution and impeach this criminal president. As citizens of this nation, every one of us is complicit in Bush's crimes. By virtue of that complicity, we are compelled by law, by morality, by history to do everything in our power to stop this war of aggression and these crimes against humanity. The Nuremberg Tribunals following World War II did not look favorably upon the first nation the world determined had waged a war of aggression, nor its "good citizens" who obeyed their government. And bear in mind, the U.S. judge who presided over those tribunals made unmistakably clear that its decisions applied not just to Nazi Germany, but to every nation on Earth from that point on.

If we refuse to be silenced and frightened by the high-class thugs across Pennsylvania Avenue; if we stop being stereotypically good soldiers and "good Americans;" if we do what history demands in this critical hour, we can get our troops home now. We can put an end to the suffering and the war crimes. We can begin to absolve our complicity. And we can give George Bush an "accountability moment" that he will never forget!