

For Immediate Release

Veterans For Peace: www.veteransforpeace.org

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PRESS CONFERENCE AND VIGIL AT FORT BRAGG TO COMMEMORATE THE MURDER OF MILITARY WOMEN IN NORTH CAROLINA

Fayetteville, North Carolina – October is “Prevention of Domestic Violence Month” and to commemorate that, both National and North Carolina organizations will commemorate the deaths of four U.S. military women who were killed in North Carolina by military males and other victims of violence in North Carolina.

“Sexual assault and violence against women is a social problem people do not want to face. The September 30th stabbing death of Sgt. Christina Smith, a Fayetteville woman, by her husband highlights the need for both the military and the local communities to talk openly about these tragedies. In 2001, the incident rate of civilian community domestic violence was 3.1 incidents per 1000, while the military community has an incident rate of 16.5 per 1000. Something needs to change,” says Fayetteville native and Executive Director of Veterans For Peace, Michael McPhearson.

WHEN: Wednesday, October 8, 2008

10am - Press Conference - Quaker Peace Center, 223 Hillside Ave, Fayetteville, NC

11:30pm - Vigil to bring awareness to and speak out against DV & SA in the Military - Main Gate of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Yadkin Road

1pm - Luncheon/discussion on violence against women - Quaker Peace Center

3pm – Wreath Laying at Lafayette Cemetery, 2301 Ramsey Street

Four US military women have been murdered in state of North Carolina in the past nine months. Military men have been accused of the murders.

The latest victim of homicide was US Army Sergeant Christina Smith, 29, who was stabbed in the neck on September 30, 2008 near Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Her US Army husband Sergeant Richard Smith, and Private First Class Matthew Kvapil have been arrested for her death. All three were assigned to a Psychological Operations unit at the Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg.

Two of the women were in the Army. Spc. Megan Touma was seven months pregnant when her body was found inside a Fayetteville hotel room June 21, 2008. A married male soldier whom she knew in Germany has since been arrested. The estranged Marine husband of Army 2nd Lt. Holley Wimunc, an Army nurse at Fort Bragg, has been arrested in her death and the burning of her body.

Marine Lance Cpl. Maria Lauterbach had been raped in May 2007 and protective orders had been issued against the alleged perpetrator, fellow Marine Cpl. Cesar Laurean. The burned body of Lauterbach and her unborn baby were found in a shallow grave in the backyard of Laurean’s home in January 2008. Laurean fled to Mexico, where he was captured by Mexican authorities. He is currently awaiting extradition to the United States to stand trial. Lauterbach’s mother testified before Congress on July 31, 2008, that the Marine Corps ignored warning signs that Laurean was a danger to her daughter.

Representatives of Veterans For Peace, the Coalition to End Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Military and the Quaker Peace House will commemorate these deaths and ask concerned members of the military and civilian community of Fayetteville to join them in these events.

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Founded in 1985, Veterans For Peace is a national organization of men and women veterans of all eras and duty stations spanning the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, Gulf and current Iraq wars as well as other conflicts cold or hot. It has chapters in nearly every state in the union and is headquartered in St. Louis, MO. Our collective experience tells us wars are easy to start and hard to stop and that those hurt are often the innocent. Thus, other means of problem solving are necessary. Veterans For Peace is an official Non- Governmental Organization (NGO) represented at the U.N.