



Exposing the True Costs of War
and Militarism Since 1985

VETERANS FOR PEACE

Organized locally. Recognized internationally.

VFP National Newsletter

veteransforpeace.org

Winter 2023-2024



WELCOME HOME, HECTOR!

December 27, 2023—Comrades active with VFP's Deported Veterans Advocacy Project (DVAP) happily welcomed Hector Lopez home at the U.S.-Mexico border upon his long-awaited repatriation to the USA. L to R: Maurice Martin, Blanca Viramontes, Lupita Cibrán, Hector Lopez, Robert Vivar, Jan Ruhman. Read about DVAP's ongoing efforts on behalf of wrongfully deported U.S. veterans in their 2023 project report on page 8.

VFP Responds to Crisis in Gaza

MANY VFP CHAPTERS and members shifted into high gear in response to Israel's genocidal bombing of Gaza, staging creative nonviolent actions underscoring the official statements issued by National VFP calling for a ceasefire and negotiations leading to a political solution—because we know from experience there is no military one. As Major General Smedley Butler said, "War is a Racket!" Our back-page photo spread represents just a fraction of the many actions staged across the country these past few months calling for #CEASEFIRE NOW!

Ann Wright Testifies at UN Security Council, Calls for Ceasefire in Gaza

ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2023, VFP's Col. (ret.) Ann Wright was asked to speak at the UN Security Council. While the topic was on weapons in Ukraine, she got in some comments about Gaza, particularly castigating the U.S. for vetoing the ceasefire resolution for Gaza. After being uploaded to the VFP channel, Ann's testimony quickly became the most popular of VFP YouTube posts with 109,018 views and 764 comments logged as this newsletter goes to press! [See youtu.be/CtJg-nGM_w0] However, due to UN rules, the statement Ann delivered at the UN Security Council was altered at the last minute from the statement she had prepared in advance, which we share below (with a few revisions made by Ann):



On the Issue of Weapons Supplied into Conflict Areas and their Detrimental Effect on the Prospects for the Settlement of Conflicts

by Ann Wright, U.S. Army Colonel (retired) & Diplomat (resigned)

Mr. President

I am pleased to address you on the issue of weapons supplied into conflict areas and their detrimental effect on the prospects for settlement of conflicts.

I served 29 years in the U.S. Army and Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. While in the U.S. Army, I taught the Law of Land Warfare and the Geneva Conventions at the JFK Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I was in the U.S. Army during the U.S. wars on Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, Grenada, Panama and the U.S. Central American wars in El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.

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VFP NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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EDITOR & GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Ellen Davidson
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Submission Guidelines

Keep Chapter Reports to ~200 words and include chapter no., name/location, and reporter's name. For photo submissions, 1200+ pixels wide is ideal. Please include a photo credit and detailed caption. Thank you!

Email submissions to:
editor@veteransforpeace.org

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Conscientious objector Yurii Sheliazhenko

Ukrainian Peace Activist Joins VFP Board of Advisors

YURII SHELIAZHENKO, a courageous advocate of nonviolence living in Kyiv, counsels young men who refuse to fight. You can imagine the pressure he is under from the Ukrainian government. His house has been ransacked more than once and he has been detained, but so far—luckily—not imprisoned. In recognition of his work, we sent him a VFP peace dove plaque made at a workshop for the disabled in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where some of the students are third- and fourth-generation victims of Agent Orange. We received a thank you video from him in return, and are delighted to announce that Yurii is now a member of our Advisory Board.

Our gift and Yurii's work represent the very best of what humans can be, if they would only stop and recognize their common humanity.

Watch the video Yurii sent us upon his acceptance of our invitation to join the VFP Advisory Board at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9pqq52ZmWg>

Welcome back, Casey!

SOME OF YOU MAY REMEMBER Casey Stinemetz from her previous staff position with Veterans For Peace. Thanks to the financial support of members and allies, we are very pleased to welcome her back to our staff as Membership Organizer. Something tells us 2024 is going to be a great year for VFP!

VETERANS FOR PEACE is a global organization of military veterans and allies whose collective efforts are to build a culture of peace by using our experiences and lifting our voices. We inform the public of the true causes of war and the enormous costs of wars, with an obligation to heal the wounds of wars. Our network is composed of over 100 chapters worldwide whose work includes: educating the public, advocating dismantling the war economy, providing services that assist veterans and victims of war, and most significant, working to end all wars.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

WE, AS MILITARY VETERANS, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end we will work with others both nationally and internationally:

- To increase public awareness of the causes and costs of war;
- To restrain our governments from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations;
- To resist racism and repression in our home communities;
- To oppose the militarization of law enforcement;
- To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons;
- To seek justice for veterans and victims of war;
- To abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

To achieve these goals, members of Veterans For Peace pledge to use nonviolent means and to maintain an organization that is both democratic and open, with the understanding that all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.

Save these 2024 Dates

MARCH 23–29: SACRED PEACE WALK

Sacred Peace Walk is an event of hope and resistance in the desert during Holy Week. For details, visit nevadadesertexperience.org or contact VFP member Dave Patterson, who has participated in the walk for years, at dpatterson998@yahoo.com.

APRIL 20-27: SHUT DOWN DRONE WARFARE!

Spring Action Week at Holloman Drone Base in Southern New Mexico is a national mobilization to nonviolently resist killer drones, sponsored by CODEPINK, Veterans For Peace, and Ban Killer Drones. Find more info at shutdowndronewarfare.org.

APRIL 27, 2024: START OF VFP PEACEWALK 2024

➔ **PeaceWalk 2024 is a National Project of Veterans For Peace.** Participate for a few miles, a few days, a few weeks, or the whole 650-mile journey from Augusta, Maine, to Washington, D.C. Go to PeaceWalk2024.org for all the details.

JULY 15–AUGUST 19, 2024: POOR PEOPLE'S ARMY MARCH

The mission of the nonviolent **Poor People's Army** (a.k.a. Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign) is to build a cooperative economy and society. Endorsed by VFP, the two-week march starts in Milwaukee—site of the Republican National Convention, and ends in Chicago—site of the Democratic National Convention. The marchers' message to both: "We reject corporate greed and demand an end to poverty." More details at poorpeoplesarmymarch.com.

A Big VFP Shoutout to Ralph Nader!

America's #1 consumer advocate for decades, Ralph Nader speaks out regularly on corporate power, militarism, and empire. We are proud to have Ralph as a VFP member and advisor, and we are extremely grateful to him for boosting our fundraising by making generous matching pledges during our August convention and on Giving Tuesday in December. *Thank you, Ralph!*



FIND MORE INFO & RESOURCES ONLINE

veteransforpeace.org

- Bylaws
- Board Meeting Minutes
- Chapter Contacts
- Code of Conduct
- Donation Page
- Downloadable Action Guides & Resources
- eNews Signup
- Endorsements
- Events Calendar
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- Zinn Fund Info

Susan Schnall, Board President

Dear Veterans For Peace Comrades & Friends,

Thank you for the great and meaningful work you do in the name of VFP for world peace; for social justice on behalf of those who struggle against the encroaching fascism of our government, the increasing greed and power of our arms industries, our politicians, our military. Thank you for what you do to create peace and justice in today's world. We need you to continue your work.

Three years ago, I was elected to the national VFP board; two years ago, I was elected President of the Board and identified a number of organizational goals:

- 1) There are obvious intergenerational issues in VFP. My goal is to honor and make effective use of the contributions of all generations involved. Older members have long histories and networks; younger people have new ideas and great energy. We also bring misunderstandings, resentment, anger. My goal is to organize our collective strengths to overcome individual human weaknesses.
- 2) I would like to continue to develop better communication between the national board, chapters, projects, and working groups.
- 3) Recognizing that the isolation and stress caused by the pandemic can make our work increasingly difficult, I look forward to working with all of you in bolstering morale and improving communication between and among us all.

We have worked hard as a national board to bring members together under a very broad umbrella of opinions, voices, and concerns—and we have maintained our focus on our core values as reflected in the Statement of Purpose: to abolish war as an instrument of national policy. Our statements on Ukraine-Russia, Gaza-Israel, War Resisters and Pacifists reflect that mission. We are going into 2024 with a national board that includes younger members; more women—including an associate member for the first time in VFP history—and more diverse members—who work together, are respectful of opinions different from theirs. Yes, we have more work to do. It is a time to understand our differences and recognize those values that bring us together.

We successfully navigated the tumultuous year of 2023, beginning with a difficult financial situation that forced us to downsize national staff and rethink our priorities—these include improving communication and increasing our visibility and distributing the messages of Veterans For Peace. When the former executive director left last year, we created a transition



VFP Board President Susan Schnall speaks at the New York City chapter's 2023 Memorial Day rally.

team composed of board members and chapter members to hire a national director, reassign staff responsibilities, and raise funds to maintain our viability. We were successful because we worked as a team, sharing responsibilities, learning how to improve VFP as we moved through the year.

We had a successful convention with incredible keynote speeches by Clare Daly, Jeffrey Sachs, and Kathy Kelly, surprise appearance of Yurii Sheliashenko, wise welcome remarks by Oren Lyons and Strong Buffalo—and brilliant and thought-provoking sessions organized by you.

We end 2023 with money in the bank (both in our savings accounts and operating accounts), improved communications through regular VFP eNews dissemination, greater visibility through member activism, annual reports provided to the board by the coordinators of our national projects and working groups, and a functional board of directors that works as a team. We have a national director who is a special communicator, tireless worker “for the people,” great fundraiser, long-time activist, and—most important—has a terrific sense of humor: Mike Ferner.

And, we operate through our Bylaws and Policies.

Yes, we have more to do this year: We will be working to maintain our gains, re-establish a couple of board committees, and stop these wars!

Thank you for all you do for peace in the world for all living things,

Susan Schnall, Board President
VETERANS FOR PEACE



A screenshot from the December 16, 2023, VFP Board Meeting (L to R, row by row, beginning top left): Board President Susan Schnall, National Director Mike Ferner, Ellen Barfield, Nick Mottern, V.P. Michael Wong, outgoing member Ken Mayers, Secretary Paul Cox, Joshua Shurley, Treasurer Mike Tork, Nyamekye “Enya” Anderson, outgoing member Michael Dempsey, Stephen Zollman (newly appointed to fill vacancy left by the resignation of Brian Trautman), Gerry Condon, Ellen Davidson (elected to the VFP board’s brand new Associate seat), and Kelly Wadsworth (newly elected).

Mike Ferner, National Director

Dear Veterans For Peace Members,

All of us in VFP are at wit’s end with the ongoing horrors in Israel-Palestine, Ukraine, and so many other places that don’t make the news, including right here at home, where vast needs go unmet to feed the war machine. But we plug on, doing the daily work required to maintain this organization we love dearly—and that’s so very needed in these times.

Susan Schnall’s positive report on this year is the real deal. The degree to which she and the board have pulled together to keep VFP fit and functioning can’t be overstated. It has been a pleasure to work with this team since I started as director on April 1, 2023. Their willingness to work long hours and take on extra responsibilities to fill the gaps during some lean months ensured our organization’s survival, enabling us to:

- go from bare cupboards to financial stability;
- fill a vacancy in communications with Chris Smiley who has driven our social media numbers literally off the charts (get to those sites from our home page);
- actively support the *Golden Rule* on its epic 11,000-mile “Great Loop” journey visiting hundreds of ports;
- increase the efficiency of administrative operations;
- increase the frequency and breadth of our eNews with the assistance of contract editor, VFP associate Becky Luening;

- prove to chapters and members they can depend on the national staff for assistance and answers;
- lend VFP’s energy and influence to the struggles for peace in Ukraine and Palestine.



PHOTO: PAUL BECKER

Shelly, full time, and Gail, part time, make sure bills are paid, memberships recorded, website updated, donors thanked, questions answered—day in and day out. Without them we would simply not have a national office.

That’s just a glimpse. To really see what we do, take a spin around our website. Under *Our Work* are our position statements and links to our National Projects and Working Groups. Under *Take Action* are our downloadable resources as well as ongoing opportunities for action. If you want detailed financial information to see how we’re doing and where the money goes, simply email our Board Treasurer Mike Tork, at vfptreasurer@gmail.com. He’ll be glad to help.

With your support, we’re hopping busy. Thank you so much!

Mike Ferner, National Director
VETERANS FOR PEACE
mike@veteransforpeace.org

VFP National Project Reports

Welcome Home, *Golden Rule*!

THE GOLDEN RULE was welcomed back to its Northern California home in Humboldt Bay with a big celebration held at the Samoa Women's Club on Sunday, October 8, 2023. The event was co-sponsored by VFP Humboldt Bay Chapter 56 and the Humboldt-based nonprofit **Which Way The Wind**. [Visit whichwaythewind.org for more information about this great organization.]

One day earlier, the peace boat was featured (and the party publicized) in the work of two chalk artists at "Pastels on the Plaza"—an annual event where beautiful works of art are chalked onto the sidewalk around the Arcata town plaza. Artworks are sponsored by local organizations and business, and the two works commissioned for the *Golden Rule* this year were sponsored by Chapter 56 member Gordy Anderson.

A social hour kicked off Sunday's festivities. Then came the official welcome by Humboldt Bay Harbor Commissioner Craig Benson, followed by speeches from a number of key personalities involved in the adventure known as the *Golden*

Rule Peace Boat Project. They included Leroy Zerlang, whose boatyard "hosted" the boat's restoration for five years; Fredy Champagne, a founding member of Garberville VFP Chapter 22 in Southern Humboldt County, who recognized the wrecked boat's potential as a VFP project and encouraged its restoration; Chuck DeWitt, the indispensable restoration coordinator; Helen Jaccard, solid *Golden Rule* Peace Boat Project manager and main coordinator of the Great Loop journey; and Gerry Condon, *Golden Rule* National Project lead. Helen and Gerry reported 100 ports-of-call over the year's 11,000-mile Great Loop voyage. Over 1,000 people were involved as crew members, organizers, hosts, speakers, and performers at 400+ events!



vfgoldenruleproject.org

Peter Aronson



Top left: Helen Jaccard enjoys the eats and accolades. Top right (L to R): Bay Commissioner Craig Benson, Fredy Champagne, Gerry Condon, and VFP Chapter 22 member Jim Truitt at the welcome home party. Bottom left: Artist Kaitlin Mottershead. Bottom right: Artist Wendee White.

Climate Crisis & Militarism



VFP Climate Crisis & Militarism Project members had fun marching in the Anti-Militarism Hub in the New York City March to End Fossil Fuels in September. Carrying the CCMP banner (L to R): Elliott Adams, Jim Rine, and Ellen Barfield. Photo: Ellen Davidson

OUR WORK CONNECTING THE CLIMATE CRISIS to wars/militarism is having an impact. On September 17, 2023, in New York City, members of VFP's Climate Crisis & Militarism Project (CCMP) marched in the Anti-Militarism Hub in the March to End Fossil Fuels. Two members of our Steering Committee, Dr. Jim Rine and VFP Board member Ellen Barfield, not only carried our banner (photo above), but also got arrested for nonviolent direct action at Wall Street the following day.

During the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP28) in Dubai, an unprecedented four sessions were held on the climate impacts of war and militarism. While we were not able to send a member to the climate conference as we had in the previous two years, our COP27 participant, CCMP Steering Committee member Cindy Piester gave two public presentations on COP28 and wrote a magazine article about participating in the annual UN climate summit. Cindy also served as a badged virtual attendant to COP28.

Our 2023 public education/advocacy work included the **No MAS** (No Military Air Shows) campaign; the new **Veterans & Labor for Sensible Priorities** campaign to cut the Pentagon budget and include military workers in a Just Transition; 30 virtual and seven in-person presentations of our slideshow;

two webinars including the kickoff to the VFP National Convention; solidarity with frontline communities; and much more.

Get involved: Check out our updated website at veteransforpeace.org/take-action/climatecrisis, email us at climate@veteransforpeace.org, schedule our presentation for your local chapter, and/or join us in the streets in 2024!

Janet Weil



Deported Veterans Advocacy Project

“Leave No One Behind”



L to R: Robert Vivar, Rep. Mark Takano, repatriated U.S. Navy Veteran Joe Rico, Military Families Speak Out National Coordinator Pat Alviso

AS ARMISTICE DAY HAS PASSED and the holiday season is upon us, we are preparing to close the books on 2023, and begin looking forward to a new chapter of advocacy for our Deported Veterans in 2024. In this report, we look back on how this year's work has advanced the goals of our National Deported Veterans Advocacy Project (DVAP), which is housed at the Sgt. Barrios Memorial VFP Chapter 182 office in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, along with the Unified U.S. Deported Veterans Resource Center, and we lay out our work for 2024.

We need your continued assistance to bring our deported veterans home. There are two things VFP members and chapters can do to support our deported veterans in the coming year: (1) Call your elected representatives in the U.S. House and Senate, and call the President. (2) Support DVAP with a one-time or a recurring monthly donation. Your generosity is what keeps our doors open for our deported vets. Give online at veteransforpeace.org/our-work/vfp-national-projects/deported-veterans-advocacy-project/donate-dvap or mail a check to the National VFP office earmarked for DVAP.

While we still have a ways to go to achieve our goals, we made significant progress during our week of lobbying in D.C. in October 2023. Sponsored by the ACLU and LULAC, over 60 members of veteran organizations, repatriated veterans

and family members, legal service providers, and advocates converged on Capitol Hill, completing over 60 meetings with congressional representatives and staffers to gain support for H.R. 4569, the Veteran Service Recognition Act of 2023.

Another very significant event was the VFP 2023 National Convention, where DVAP presented a call to renew the 2016 Convention-approved Resolution in support of asking the U.S. Congress to amend 8 U.S.C. 1101 (a)(22). We are happy to see that the updated VFP Resolution 2023-1 for Deported Veterans was approved in a nearly unanimous vote of 89-to-1 (with 4 abstentions). A very similar resolution was presented by our collaborating Don Diego VFW Post 7420 in San Diego, which passed not only the California State VFW, but was also adopted by the VFW National Convention.

When I began advocating for deported veterans in early 2014, the issue was a very well-kept secret. With the creation of DVAP and the wide support received from VFP chapters across the country, the issue gained much attention not only from the public but also from congressional representatives, prompting several of them to visit our deported veterans in Tijuana. Despite nationwide attention, however, the fact is that legislation in support of repatriating deported veterans has still not become law. So our efforts continue to correct this injustice.

While the lobby week trip was a success, gaining several additional co-sponsors, our outreach continues with a special focus on Republican members of Congress. We will continue to dialogue with them on the importance of their support for this modest bipartisan bill, which has the sponsorship of only two Republican members of the House of Representatives and no Republicans from the Senate.

The American Legion National Commander has written a letter supporting the Veterans Service and Recognition Act; we have the support of National VFP as well as VFW National with their respective resolutions; and of course LULAC National President as well. However, we still don't have the support needed from elected Republican officials to push this important legislation forward. **This presents a great opportunity for VFP chapters around the country to make a difference**, like they did in 2015, leading up to the resolution being passed in 2016. Many of our chapters are in heavily conservative congressional districts. As constituents, elected officials are obligated to respond to your written request. Please write and call your representatives and urge them to support this modest bipartisan veterans bill. Remind them this is a veterans' issue and not an immigration issue, and should be handled as such!

Robert Vivar



SOVA continues the fight to Save Our VA: Please join us!

THE THREATS TO VA HEALTH CARE are not lessening. In October, SOVA went to Washington, D.C., to meet with the staff of 30 members of Congress, primarily members of both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees, to alert them to these threats:

- Senate bills S.1315 (HEALTH Act of 2023) and S.2649 (Making Community Care Work for Veterans Act of 2023), which would codify current access standards for referral to private-sector care (i.e., making it hard to do away with these standards that move veterans away from higher-quality and more cost-effective VA care) and create an unequal playing field for telehealth visits.
- VA staffing issues, including long-time staffing shortages, centralized hiring at the regional level begun during the Trump era, and the recent Integrated Critical Staffing Program (ICSP) that will spend \$23 billion over 10 years hiring temporary staff.
- There are problems around referring rural veterans to the private sector for health care. The existing shortage of providers and facilities continues to worsen, and services that do exist cannot adequately meet the complex health care needs of many veterans.

A major goal of the in-person meetings was establishing relationships with congressional staff to allow continued input as issues and bills arise. Most staff were very receptive, and SOVA has begun following up with them to maintain these relationships.

These weren't the only congressional meetings this year. Zoom allowed for eight meetings before going to D.C., and more virtual meetings are being planned. **A constituent is needed to be able to meet with any congressman who is not on a Veterans' Affairs Committee, so SOVA needs people to join us. Contact SOVA at sovamail@yahoo.com if you are willing to meet with your congressional representatives with us.**



Rep. Rashida Tlaib was one of the few members of Congress who met personally with SOVA supporters, though not for a photo. Her staffer, Andrew Myslik (second from left), is shown here with Joni Clemens, Arlys Herem, and Bruce Carruthers.

THERE ARE PROBLEMS AROUND REFERRING RURAL VETERANS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR HEALTH CARE. THE EXISTING SHORTAGE OF PROVIDERS AND FACILITIES CONTINUES TO WORSEN, AND SERVICES THAT DO EXIST CANNOT ADEQUATELY MEET THE COMPLEX HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF MANY VETERANS.

The threats to VA health care come from many fronts, as the issues addressed in the D.C. meetings exemplify. SOVA needs more people to sign up to receive SOVA Updates and respond to our Call to Action to send letters to your representatives. The 16 updates that SOVA sent out this year yielded over 4,000 letters to members of Congress, but we need more! Please sign up on the VFP website at veteransforpeace.org/sova and join our efforts.



Korea Peace Campaign



VFP-KPC members Ellen Barfield, Soobok Kim (and Ann Wright, not pictured) were among many others who turned out July 26–28 for the National Mobilization to End the Korean War, in Washington, D.C.

IN OBSERVANCE of the 70th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice, VFP's Korea Peace Campaign (KPC) worked on various educational and advocacy projects in cooperation with other peace groups working on the Korea issue.

First, we participated in the national advocacy week on Korea (online) in June, asking our representatives in the House to co-sponsor H.R. 1369, Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act. John (“Jack”) Doxey and Woody Powell, two VFP members who are veterans of the Korean War and peace warriors, also contacted their representatives to request co-sponsorship of the bill. Due to the joint efforts of a coalition of peace groups, we have increased the co-sponsors of the bill to 35 at this time.

Second, some of our KPC members participated in the national advocacy events in D.C. on July 27–28, in conjunction with the 70th anniversary of the Armistice. On the morning of July 27, a press conference was held at Capitol Hill, urging public support for HR 1369. Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) spoke there as one of the co-sponsors of the bill. In the afternoon, about 300 people joined in a peace vigil across from the White House, calling for a peace treaty to end the Korean War officially. The next day, a public conference was held on the topic “Prospects and Challenges for a Peace Treaty” at George Washington University. Emeritus Prof. Bruce Cumings, a prominent historian on Korea, delivered the keynote speech. This was followed by two excellent panel discussions: “The Human Costs of Unending War” and “The Threat of Nuclear War.” Korea Peace Campaign coordinator Ann Wright was one of the speakers on the second panel. Retired Air Force Lieutenant General Dan Leaf also spoke.

Third, we co-sponsored a workshop on the “Rising Danger of War in the Asia-Pacific” at the 2023 VFP National Convention.

KPC member K.J. Noh served as a panelist. More than 50 people attended the workshop, now available on the VFP YouTube channel at youtu.be/kmhuBTANcZ4.

Fourth, we submitted a convention resolution on the topic, “Observing the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice,” co-sponsored by VFP Chapters 34, 55, and 113. This resolution was approved in the recent national voting. Thanks to all those who supported our resolution!

The Korea Peace Campaign project holds monthly video meetings where we share current news on U.S.-Korea developments and discuss future activities. We welcome VFP members to join our meetings. If interested, please contact kpc@veteransforpeace.org for the meeting link. We also welcome your donations! Find VFP-KPC online at veteransforpeace.org/korea-peace-campaign.

Uranium Weapons, Cluster Munitions, and Land Mines

IN JUNE 2023, the VFP National Board authorized the revitalization and expansion of the scope of the Uranium Weapons, Cluster Munitions, and Land Mine Working Group. A cadre of the working group hailing from across the U.S. and Canada has met virtually each Monday to forge a mission statement, statement of purpose, and priority of tasks.

The working group is focusing initially on uranium weapons (depleted uranium or DU), because there is no international convention on the prohibition of manufacture, sale, or use of these weapons, which pose a radiological and toxic chemical threat to all biota. The U.S. president has authorized the export of DU munitions to Ukraine and has proposed a large sale of these weapons to Israel.

This working group condemns all use of depleted uranium weapons by any actor under any circumstances. We seek compliance with the precautionary principle, international humanitarian law, and laws of armed conflict.

Our work continues in conjunction with the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW) to educate the public and legislators and to call for curtailing the export of DU munitions to foreign militaries and use by the DOD.

Our working group posts its work on the VFP national website at veteransforpeace.org/our-work/working-groups/du-cluster-bombs-and-landmine-working-group.

We welcome new members. Contact Co-chair John Wilks at johnwilksiii@windstream.net or 575-743-0477.

Democracy and Peace

PEACE ACTIVISTS like to bang our heads against the wall! That may sound odd, but look at the evidence: How many times have we mobilized against a war or a weapons bill, worked long hours, spent our limited funds and limited energy, precious moments of our limited lives—with meager results. OUCH!

When our taxes buy the next coup, the next invasion, the next generation of electronic warfare, we mobilize again with the same results ... OUCH! And again ... OUCH!

Starts to feel like we don't run our own country, and our own government is the biggest barrier to the better life we deserve. Except it's not really our government, is it?

Weapons corporations decide our foreign policy. Insurance corporations decide our health policy. Corporations in the highway lobby make transportation policy ... and on ... and on ...

This Democracy and Peace Working Group formed at the 2023 convention is different from any other in VFP history. We don't research the latest numbers in the Pentagon budget or join coalitions opposed to certain weapon systems. Don't get me wrong. Those are important things to do to oppose the madmen arsonists running the show, but in the end it's only firefighting.

This working group will study fire *prevention*—how VFP can begin to adopt language and strategies towards the long-term goal of wresting our democracy from undemocratic corporate control. Example: Removing First Amendment “rights” usurped by corporations (think lobbying and political contributions ruled “free speech”) would greatly reduce the time and energy we spend fighting their legislation.

We can do it. We *must* do it if we want our lives, our energy, and our treasure to make a lasting difference! By practicing fire prevention even as we race to put out fires, we will find all sorts of allies in all sorts of movements fighting their own fires!

We will publish our findings and ideas as our work commences. Below are a couple resources to jumpstart your understanding of the issues we aim to address. We invite VFP members to join our group and we welcome your ideas for “fire prevention” strategies.

- **Legalize Democracy.** This 30-min. film from our partners at **Move to Amend** [movetoamend.org] clearly describes how we got in this mess and presents actions that are being taken today to build democracy in order to get the life we the people deserve and ensure a healthy planet where we can live it.

- **Taken for a Ride** [dailymotion.com/video/x6dt8ji]. This PBS documentary illustrates what happened to mass transit in this country by telling the little-known story of how the highway lobby took over transportation policy. It's a great film, but stops just short of recommending a democratic solution.



- **The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America** is a classic work authored by Lawrence Goodwyn (Oxford University Press, 1978) about the flowering of the largest democratic mass movement in American history. It is also necessarily a book about democracy itself. Finally, it explains why Americans have far less democracy than we think and what has to happen to alter that situation. The introduction is online at www.ratical.org/corporations/PMSHAGIntro.html.

Mike Ferner

Nuclear Abolition

THE VFP NUCLEAR ABOLITION Working Group is entering its fourth year of active engagement with VFP members and with the larger movement for a nuclear-free world. For three years, we have been mostly maintaining a biweekly meeting schedule, with one meeting a month reserved for guest speakers who have expertise in one or another aspect of the nuclear cycle and the movement to abolish nuclear weapons.

Our accomplishments in 2023 include hosting many wonderful speakers and actively sharing lots of nuclear-related news and analysis in our meetings and on our No Nukes listserv. We have successfully maintained a significant core group while attracting new members. We actually helped to spawn a new and very important Uranium Weapons Working Group [see page 10], which began as a discussion and then emerged as a subgroup of our Nuclear Abolition Working Group. Our members also were active organizers and promoters of the Great Loop voyage of the *Golden Rule* anti-nuclear sailboat.

The Nuclear Abolition Working Group authored the draft statement adopted by the VFP National Board as an official VFP statement, “Veterans For Peace: Gaza Massacre Could Lead to Nuclear War.” This statement was published online by *Peace and Planet News*, *Popular Resistance*, *Common Dreams*, and *Antiwar.com*, as well as being posted on the VFP website and shared in VFP eNews and social media posts. The statement presents a unique and important perspective: that the U.S./Israeli genocide against Gaza is tempting a wider war that could even go nuclear. It reiterates VFP’s call for a ceasefire in Gaza. It calls on all nine nuclear-armed nations, including Israel, to take urgent steps to build trust and begin the process of eliminating all nuclear weapons.

The signature accomplishment of the Nuclear Abolition Working Group continues to be the *Veterans For Peace Nuclear* ...continued on page 14

China Working Group

THROUGHOUT 2023, VFP's China Working Group members met monthly and engaged in a number of activities. We exchanged a very high volume of emails, sharing informative articles, videos, and research with each other in our joint quest to develop a fuller understanding of China and related issues. To help educate others about issues related to China, we also shared information with various personal and public email lists we subscribe to, including VFP.

This year we added several videos to our YouTube channel, **Veterans For Peace with China**: youtube.com/@veteransforpeacewithchina5667. We now have 12 videos up, featuring speakers such as Ray McGovern, K.J. Noh, George Koo, and Sara Flounders. The videos debunk some of the mainstream media's simplistic—often inaccurate, and sometimes outright false—depictions of China and Asia, and explain Asia's complex politics more in depth and more realistically. They also highlight how dangerous U.S. escalation is, how the U.S. is intentionally surrounding China with military bases, 60% of our naval forces, forming hostile alliances, pushing up against China's red lines, driving arms races in Asia, and seeking war. Videos you will find on our YouTube channel:

- Working group member Sara Flounders' report on her summer visit to Xinjiang and other parts of China, and related topics. Sara is co-chair of the International Action Center and author of several books including *Sanctions: A Wrecking Ball in a Global Economy*.

- "Asia on the Brink of Armageddon" with K.J. Noh. A member of VFP and Pivot To Peace, K.J. is a scholar who has spoken on many news programs and written extensively on the new Cold War on China. He has done dozens of interviews and webinars on China and Asia with numerous media outlets.

- Taiwanese academic Professor Fu Daiwie speaking on antiwar and peace. Fu Daiwie and three other professors recently issued a peace statement with four demands calling for peace over the Taiwan Strait. (Working group members Michael Kramer and Sara Flounders got to meet with the professor in person and discussed issues regarding Taiwan island.)

- "WW2 Redux: The Endpoint of U.S. Policy," with working group member Professor John Walsh, who has written on issues of peace and health care for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *East BayTimes*, *Peace & Planet News*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Asia Times*, *LA Progressive*, *CounterPunch*, among others. Find his work at asiatimes.com/author/john-v-walsh.

IN AUGUST, our working group produced a webinar jointly with the VFP Nuclear Abolition Working Group and the VFP Korean Peace Campaign for the 2023 VFP National Convention, entitled "Rising Danger of War in Asia Pacific: U.S. v. China and North Korea." The webinar was moderated by retired Col. Ann Wright and features panelists K.J. Noh, Simone Chun, and Peter Kuznick. Our working group also invested in



*The ancient and the modern blend together in today's China.
Photo by Michael Wong, October 2023*

a paid ad in support of the convention. Watch our webinar on the Veterans For Peace YouTube channel: youtu.be/kmhuBTANcZ4?si=zK7SCkrt5N4Q0aCz

IN OCTOBER, China Working Group coordinator Michael Wong traveled to China with the "Comfort Women" Justice Coalition [remembercomfortwomen.org], visiting Hong Kong, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Nanjing. Michael made a report to the VFP National Board upon his return.

IN NOVEMBER, during the APEC summit held in San Francisco [APEC = Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation], Li Jingjing, a star reporter from China's CGTN news network, spoke with K.J. Noh and Carl Zha, a Chinese American who has his own very popular YouTube channel and lives in Bali, about the current state of U.S.-China relations and the possible impact of Xi Jinping's visit. The 45-minute interview is on Li Jingjing's YouTube channel: youtube.com/watch?v=q8ld7U9sVaQ.

Li Jingjing also interviewed VFP National Vice President Michael Wong and two retired San Francisco Superior Court judges, Lillian Sing and Julie Tang, on the topic of Asian struggles during the U.S. Cold War on China. Watch the 52-minute video at: youtu.be/nZkh_bGSexw

IN 2024, the VFP China Working Group is planning a trip to China on which other VFP folks will be invited. Details to be announced soon. If you are interested in this trip or our work email us at: vfpchinaworkinggroup@veteransforpeace.org.

LINKS to the China Working Group YouTube channel, articles written by members, and a report of CWG's 2022 activities can be found on our working group web page: veteransforpeace.org/our-work/working-groups/china-working-group

I KEEP MOVING

by Jenny Pacanowski (2011), VFP Poet Laureate

Seriously, nowhere is safe.
The grate's warmth gave enough comfort to capture a few winks
All my belongings lay underneath my head,
my functional ruck sack pillow.
No one can steal it without awakening me.
My sleeping bag wraps around me like a cocoon
without the luxury of a beautiful transformation.
I awake to the same day,
replaying,
as time passes without any effort or contribution from me.
I lowered my guard just long enough to get kicked by a cop
for sleeping on the street near Macy's.

NO REST.

I keep moving, my bruised ribs slowing me slightly.
It is a bitter reminder that I am surrounded by emptiness.
I long for the days when my buddies had my back.
Sleep came quick after the exhausting
yet purpose-driven days convoying on the roads of Iraq.
I would lie on top of my sleeping bag
surrounded by guns and the soldiers who knew how to use them.

Life was simple, dare I say, easy.
Or at least predictable.
You followed orders.
You did your job.

You were in danger.
You were protected.
You lived or died.
You could rely on the fact that there was NO GRAY.
We kept moving,
Like I do now.
Sitting in the middle of the Iraq desert with a disabled vehicle was
like
waiting for the vultures to pick your eyes out
while you were still bleeding, immobilized by injury
And death was imminent yet lingering.



Though the Homeless Veterans Working Group is not currently meeting, a number of VFP members make it a priority to assist unsheltered people living on their streets, knowing that many of them are military veterans. Since 2011, VFP San Diego Chapter 91's Compassion Campaign has raised over \$190,000 and purchased 5,519 sleeping bags, most of which have been distributed. Left: Jan Ruhman and Stan Levin handing out bags on November 27, 2023.

So, I still keep moving.
No one needs to see me,
It only hurts them,
Blaming themselves for my actions that
Their good intentions have no control over.

I don't care.
I don't want to be saved.
I don't deserve it.
I hate the daylight.
People stare and scoff, "get a job", "lazy", "bum"
Avoiding eye contact because
I am a reality that could afflict anyone
I'm an uncomfortable reminder of fear.
Of loss
I keep moving throughout the tourist spots,
watching for the school buses from out of state.
Hoping,
I am the first nomadic traveler they have ever seen and their offerings
flow into my hat.
Those careless eaters with nice coats and fancy sneakers,
Always leave warm french fries and half consumed burgers in their
Mickie-D bags.

Sometimes the conscientious, bleeding hearts want to bargain with
my freedom of choice.
"Don't buy alcohol or drugs with my money"
"OK"

As the 40 ounces of liquid flow down my throat,
Reality drifts away into the soft fuzzy glow of the street lamp.
No one truly sees me as the sun dwindles on the horizon.
There is enough sobriety in that thought for anyone.
I escape from the gawking onlookers
by finding solace among the statues at the edge of the park.
My buzz is wearing off as my feet begin to throb.
My combat boots have served me well.
They have endured the brunt of my searching.

Once upon a time,
Me and my boots had
Missions to complete
Tasks to perform
Winning hearts and minds
Fearing our departure
Awaiting our arrival
Honoring our return
Now I place one foot in front of the other
to the pace of my beating heart along a blank map.

I LOOK FOWARD a future when homelessness and suicide do not plague our veterans and communities. To that end, I would like to personally invite veterans and their families to explore expressing their voices in the empowerment workshops provided at WVE&T (Women Veterans Empowered & Thriving). Research shows that suppressing and avoiding speaking our truth and experiences leads to physical pain and disease. In our WVE&T workshops, we facilitate the development of practical skills that can be applied in the real world. Our workshops are open to men as well as women veterans, and to civilian supporters (all VFP members and affiliates welcome).

—Jenny Pacanowski, Iraq Veteran, Founder and Director of Women Veterans Empowered & Thriving: womenveteransempowered.org

Speaking for Peace and Environmental Justice in Okinawa and Japan

By tour coordinator Rachel Clark with presenter Pat Elder



Picture from a tour stop in Okinawa (L to R): Okinawan artist Yuken Teruya; unidentified woman (in mask); VFP associate member Pat Elder; Anthropology Prof. Hideki Yoshikawa, Meio University, environmental activist; VFP lifetime associate member Rachel Clark; Chatan Town Council member Yumi Nakasone, mother of three kids, a PFAS victim; Ginowan City Council member Chie Miyagi, peace activist.

THE 2023 VFP PEACE SPEAKING TOUR was conducted from mid-September through early October in Okinawa and Japan. Financial support for the tour came from many individual and organizational supporters across the U.S. and Japan, including VFP National and a number of VFP chapters.

From the U.S., VFP associate member Pat Elder joined as a speaker for the entire tour, VFP Poet Laureate Jenny Pacanowski joined via Zoom at three venues, and Matt Hoh provided two amazing videos that shaped the nature and purpose of this year's tour. One of them dealt with the intricacies of the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement that forces Japan into a kind of vassal state status with the U.S. regarding environmental damage caused by U.S. forces.

From Japan, Ken'ichi Narikawa, co-representative of VFP Japan Chapter 1004, joined most of the destinations as a veteran speaker. Ken'ichi, a former Self Defense Forces (SDF) Navy Lt. Commander, was deployed to Okinawa as well as Djibouti in Africa and many other places. Pat Elder observed that Ken'ichi's "speech detailing his 27-year career with the Japanese Defense Forces ... was a gripping monologue that mirrored the experiences many veterans in the U.S. have experienced."

Over three weeks the group traveled to: Okinawa (including two remote islands); Yokosuka; Kitakyushu; Nagasaki; Sasebo; Hiroshima; Iwakuni; Tokushima; Nishinomiya (Kobe); Kyoto; Kyotango; Komatsu; Kaga; and Nakano, Tokyo.

As we traveled, Pat Elder tirelessly produced reports for each location that described the threat posed to human health and the environment by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. Awareness of PFAS as a serious environmental issue is mushrooming not only in Japan but across the globe, wherever U.S. military bases exist.

The Japanese—until now—have been hesitant to cover the role of the U.S. and Japanese militaries in the use of these toxins and how they are ingested by people. The tiny amount of coverage in the Japanese media regarding PFAS use by the military had been limited to a discussion of their use in firefighting foams, the occasional accidents, and their impact on drinking water. We changed the dynamic!

We were successful in attracting important front-page coverage throughout the country that focused on Pat's message that these chemicals are used in a host of military activities—from engine cleaning to wire coating to chrome plating—and that the toxins are regularly allowed to empty into surface waters and wastewater treatment plants that are not equipped to remove the chemicals.

Throughout the tour, we stressed that the situation has been caused by the callous and irresponsible attitude of the U.S.

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Nuclear Abolition Working Group

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Posture Review, which has been widely shared, including in April, when the *Golden Rule* was in Washington, D.C., and its crew and supporters distributed the *VFP Nuclear Posture Review* to every single senator and representative. The Nuclear Abolition Working Group intends to update the *VFP Nuclear Posture Review* in 2024. We intend to keep it a living document around which we can continue to educate and mobilize.

Our three-person Coordinating Committee is made up of Jim Wohlgenuth of the Nashville, Tennessee, chapter (and VFP Radio), Greg Corning of the Sante Fe, New Mexico, chapter, and Gerry Condon from the VFP Board of Directors.

Because we are all so busy on multiple fronts, we recently decided to change our meeting schedule to monthly. Currently we meet on the fourth Friday at 6 pm Eastern time.

Instead of having a monthly speaker to address a relatively small group (15–25 people), we will now be organizing fewer speakers—perhaps bi-monthly—at times when we can gather larger audiences (weekday evenings and weekends).

We will also confer with the VFP Board to see if it makes sense for this essential and proven working group to apply to become a National Project of Veterans For Peace.

Gerry Condon



Chapter Reports



Tucson Veterans For Peace Chapter 13 members pause for the camera during the October 7, 2023, Poor People's Campaign Rally. Separate photo at left: Frank Jents (at a different event). Group (L to R): Hassan Clement, Alice Ritter, Suzie Garrett, Cara Bissell, and Ray Cage. Separate photo at right: Betts Putnam-Hidalgo leading the Raging Grannies.

#013 – TUCSON, AZ

Veterans For Peace Jon Miles Chapter 13 meets monthly on the second Monday, 6:30-8:30 pm. Our meetings are hybrid so members have the choice of attending via Zoom or in person in the Tucson Ward 3 City Council Conference Room.

We start meetings with a recognition of Indigenous Peoples. Despite multiple intrusions and occupations of the Tohono O'odham Nation ancestral lands by other nations, we believe it is important to acknowledge the original First Nations inhabitants of the region. Some are descendants of the Huhugam (Hohokam), here for time immemorial. We in Veterans For Peace John Miles Chapter 13—in the place now called Tucson, Arizona—acknowledge our presence on their unceded ancestral land. May we all learn from and practice life-affirming connections! History is still being revealed. We support the return of these lands.

In 2023, Tucson chapter activities included:

- Tabling at Juneteenth event at the Kino Sports Complex
- Tabling at Amphi Neighborhood Resource Fair
- Military Community Resource Center (MCRC) committee member (located between Davis Monthan AFB and Tucson community)
- “No More War” weekly Sunday vigil commemorating deceased members Gretchen Nielsen and Bob Phillips
- Counter-recruiting demonstrations every Thursday

- Monthly highway cleanup on the third Thursday
- Monthly demonstration at Davis Monthan AFB
- Monthly demonstration at Raytheon

Our chapter also joined in the Poor People's Campaign's “National Call for Moral Revival” on October 7, 2023.

Cara Bissell

#023 – ROCHESTER, NY

On Memorial Day 2023, the Rochester chapter appeared in our local parade, marching with VFP banners and flags. On June 8, Chapter 23 hosted the annual USS *Liberty* memorial service, honoring the lives lost at the hands of an attack by Israel on the USS *Liberty* in 1967. In July, Chapter 23 was very pleased to welcome the *Golden Rule* peace boat to Rochester as it traveled along its Great Loop path. In September, Chapter 23 hosted our annual picnic in partnership with affiliated organizations and friends of the chapter. On September 21, we participated in the annual International Day of Peace rally with our sister organization, Genesee Valley Citizens for Peace.

We were very excited to participate in the annual Witness for Palestine Film Festival, which took place at the end of October 2023. In light of recent events between Hamas and Israel, this was an important educational experience for our members and for the public. [See thelittle.org/witnesspalestine2023/]

Jeremiah Knowles

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VFP Chapter Reports

#027 – TWIN CITIES, MN

VFP Twin Cities Chapter 27, along with Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) and several other peace groups, protested at Camp Ripley near Little Falls, Minnesota, during their semi-annual open house. Ripley is the training site for the Minnesota National Guard and recently added drone training to its arsenal. Besides welcoming visitors with our signage [photo below], we entered the front gates with our replica tank that shoots flowers! We were politely asked to leave, which we did, without incident. At *Open Streets* in Minneapolis, we employed our latest banner, “STOP the WARS: SAVE the EARTH.”

Mike McDonald



#034 – NEW YORK CITY

VFP NYC continues hosting online monthly meetings with great speakers, and in-person peace and social justice events.

Meeting speakers: Gerry Condon on the *Golden Rule's* visit to Cuba; Helen Jaccard, upon the *Golden Rule's* visit to NYC; Doug Lummis re U.S. military bases on Okinawa; Prof. Kunitoshi Sakurai re PFAS environmental contamination in Okinawa; and representatives from our state's Right2Boycott coalition.

Chapter projects: Move the Money; Save Yemen; Agent Orange; *Peace & Planet News*; Ban Killer Drones; Julian Assange; and VFP Peace Speaking Tour (Japan and Okinawa).

In-person events: Ceasefire in Gaza; Peace in Ukraine; Climate Crisis and Militarism; Korea reunification; demilitarizing



NYC Chapter 34 commemorates the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 2023. Ellen Davidson also captured some great images of their banner drop from onboard the USS Intrepid Aircraft Carrier. See her photo album at: photos.app.goo.gl/En4dJsVyy4frFXx26

Okinawa; ending Saudi support for war in Yemen; Julian Assange; BLM; and nuclear weapons abolition.

During NYC's May 18–26 hosting of VFP's anti-nuclear ketch, *Golden Rule*, events were held at the UN, Amalgamated Bank, Quaker Meeting House, City Hall, Riverside Church, and Maryhouse, coordinated by the amazing Anthony Donovan.

We staged a banner drop from the USS *Intrepid* Aircraft Carrier to commemorate the Hiroshima anniversary. Our annual Memorial Day Commemoration featured poetry, music, and a solemn processional through Battery Park.

In November, VFP NYC Chapter 34 received the Brooklyn For Peace *Pathmakers to Peace Award* honoring our contributions to peace and justice.

Bob Keilbach

#035 – SPOKANE, WA

With the arrival of autumn, we in Chapter 35 evaluated our past accomplishments and reconsider our structure to guide our future direction. Outcomes must be worth the efforts.

Spokane endures daily flyovers of KC-135 Stratotankers, military “gas stations in the sky,” training or returning from international missions refueling 24-hour nuclear bombers and surveillance aircraft.

In solidarity with Defuse Nuclear War and the Washington Against Nuclear Weapons coalition (WANW), we picketed the Foley Federal Courthouse and Rep. McMorris Rodgers' office on September 26.

Members attended the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane's *Praxis: Building Beloved Community Now* conference, which included forums on Israel-Palestine, Salish Language preservation, organizing, and an excellent panel opposing new jail expenditures.

Several Spokane chapter members contribute essays to

#042 – CONNECTICUT



A friend of Spokane Chapter 35, Jacob Johns (Hopi, Akimel-O'odham) was shot by a MAGA nationalist. The picture above shows Jacob drumming at Standing Rock; his video from that event is posted online at [youtube.com/watch?v=YUwGExNlmzs&t=32s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUwGExNlmzs&t=32s). We appeal to our VFP comrades to support Jacob's work and recovery by making a donation at www.backbonecampaign.org/jacob

the Dorothy Day Labor Forum monthly newsletter, on topics such as militarism, environmental sustainability, and police accountability.

We picketed in solidarity with Wild Idaho Rising Tide and Columbia Riverkeeper to try to stop the TC Energy GTN Express natural gas pipeline coming from Canada, through Washington, Oregon, California, into Idaho. [Unfortunately, the pipeline was approved by legislators on October 19.] Members joined a PSL rally in advance of the October 16 Spokane City Council meeting, opposing their unanimous vote to "support Israel" without seeking input from citizens first.

And we are closely following the lawsuit filed September 18, 2023, in Spokane Federal Court by Guantanamo Bay detainee Abu Zubaydah charging former Spokane psychologists James Elmer Mitchell and John "Bruce" Jessen with torture.

May Peace Prevail on Earth.

Hollis Higgins



September 26, 2023—In solidarity with Defuse Nuclear War and the Washington Against Nuclear Weapons coalition (WANW), Chapter 35 members picketed at the Spokane office of Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers. Photo by Hollis Higgins.

On September 22, 2023, VFP Connecticut had two tables at the annual Veterans Stand Down conducted by the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs, an event attended by hundreds of veterans and their family members.

At one table, Jim Brasile was joined by members Paul Nyklicek and veterans Jim P and Millie Grenough, her husband Paul, and Bill Potvin. We handed out materials explaining VFP's Save Our VA, Homeless Veterans, and Deported Veterans Advocacy Projects, and the Veterans for Inner Peace Working Group. Thanks to Jim P's wife Barbara for creating three new signs!



Veterans For Peace members and friends helped out with Chapter 42 tabling at the Veterans Stand Down in Connecticut.

Assisting with tabling were students from the Nursing Practitioners program at Yale's School of Nursing. Abby and Rai helped at our table and were very interested in the idea of achieving peace through less investment in the military.

Our tabling materials included "The Human Cost of War" traveling memorial. A basket that contains the portraits and names of over 6,000 to 7,000 American soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, it was inspired by members of the Winsted area Peace Action Committee of the North Congregational Church in New Hartford in 2012. Thanks to Frances Moulder, this is now a regular part of VFP Connecticut's tabling presentation. Later research indicates we would need four more baskets of the same size to hold the names of U.S. soldiers who have committed suicide during the same period of time. VFP

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VFP Chapter Reports

Connecticut Chapter 42 continued:

members have raised the question: How many baskets would be needed to hold the portraits of all the Middle East victims?

Inner Peace was the focus of our second table. The tent was decorated with colorful Peace memorabilia from the lifetime collection of Eric Stamm, who was a member of Quaker Meeting House in West Hartford. New chapter member Rev. Carmen organized this table, where we gave out healing affirmations cards by Louise Hays and taught breathing techniques to help vets reduce PTSD episodes. At the end of the day, nine people attended a brief introduction to meditation by Millie Grenough and Paul Bloom entitled "PTSD and Meditation."

Jim Brasile

#046 – MONTEREY, CA

In 2023, VFP Chapter 46 members not only honored the Monterey chapter's key founding members and legacy, but also expanded its impact through diverse activities and community engagements. As we remember those who paved the way, like Gordon Smith, we remain committed to advocating peace, justice, and understanding, both locally and globally. Our journey continues, inspired by the past and driven by hope for a peaceful future.

Longtime VFP member Gordon Smith passed away this summer. His tireless efforts and vision were instrumental in establishing Chapter 46, echoing the spirit of peace and brotherhood that defines Veterans For Peace. His passing is a

profound loss, and his legacy continues to inspire our work.

Our chapter achieved 501(c)(3) status in 2023, initiating a successful fundraising campaign within the local community, enhancing our ability to support peace-focused initiatives.

Our Armistice Day event marked a significant outreach to tens of thousands of Peninsula residents, commemorating the essence of peace and remembrance.

Our active involvement in local peace coalition planning and events has fostered stronger community ties and reinforced our commitment to collective peace efforts. We demonstrated solidarity with diverse causes by actively supporting local Juneteenth events. With the Monterey Peace and Justice Center we celebrated the International Day of Peace on September 22 with a screening of *Peace One Day*, underscoring our commitment to global peace advocacy. We also collaborated on screenings of *Marshal* and *The Boys Who Said No*, and took part in other events promoting peace education and awareness.

This summer we brought our message of peace to thousands of residents by participating in Monterey's 4th of July Parade. In August, our chapter took part in the solemn Nagasaki-Hiroshima Lantern Ceremony, remembering the victims of that tragedy and advocating a nuclear-free world.

Justin Loza and Michael Dempsey



Gordon Smith



VFP Chapter 46 in Monterey, California, regularly organizes protests at Window on the Bay. This year, they actively protested the use of cluster bombs in Ukraine, emphasizing the need for humane warfare tactics and the protection of civilian lives.

#056 – HUMBOLDT BAY, CA

Like many chapters, our post-COVID attendance numbers have yet to recover. However, a few of us have found ways to continue monthly meetings and engage our community by waging peace through educational activities. Below are some chapter highlights from 2023.

August 5: Chapter 56 members Gordy Anderson and Peter Aronson tabled at Arcata's 39th Floating Lantern Ceremony commemorating the atomic bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki.

September 6: Chapter 56 had a presence at the Community Belonging Fair presented by Cal Poly Humboldt's Office of Student Life, Health, and Education, a campus-wide event that included 43 veterans and over 400 family members of vets. Members Rob Hepburn, Shawn Leon, Gordy Anderson and Peter Aronson staffed an education table with VFP-related handouts [photo below].

October 5–7: Each year, with the assistance of nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individual volunteers, our community gives extra help to veterans and their families at the North Coast Stand Down, providing food, lodging, and vital services in a supportive environment. Chapter 56 members Rob Hepburn and Peter Aronson tabled at this year's stand down, offering Q&A and handouts to vets and their family members.

October 8: Chapter 56 co-hosted a welcome home party to celebrate the safe return of the *Golden Rule* peace boat and the resounding success of its Great Loop journey [story on page 6].

November 9: Our Armistice Day program at the Veterans Services Office of CalPoly Humboldt featured a review of VFP internationally and locally with invitations to join; a history of Armistice Day and its change to Veterans Day; poetry; examples of military/veteran altruistic projects (e.g. disaster relief, Iraq Water Project, Vietnam UXO removal); and a history of armistices. Chapters members Peter Aronson, Gordy Anderson, Rob Hepburn, and Shawn Leon spoke. Indeed, it takes only a few active members to continue to WAGE PEACE!

Peter Aronson



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Traverse City, Northern Michigan, September 21, 2023—After beginning the day with a sunrise ceremony, VFP Chapter 50 celebrated the International Day of Peace by planting peace poles with students at five area elementary schools.

#050 – NO. MICHIGAN / TRAVERSE CITY

Our chapter welcomed the *Golden Rule* and crew to our community this summer. On August 22, we hosted an event at our beautiful State Theater, showing the films *Making Waves: The Rebirth of the Golden Rule* and *The Phoenix of Hiroshima*, with over 300 people in attendance. The audience was treated to an informative Q&A with Gerry Condon and Helen Jaccard at film's end. Although the *Golden Rule* did not make it to Traverse City due to the weather, over 100 people braved the conditions to attend the incredible program of speakers and music we hosted on August 23.

On September 21, our celebration of the International Day of Peace began with a sunrise ceremony attended by over 50 people, including 20 junior high students. Later, the Traverse City mayor read a proclamation drafted by Veterans For Peace declaring Traverse City a city of peace, "at least for this day, and perhaps the next and the next."

Our chapter members then traveled to five area elementary schools. We donated a peace pole and had a ceremony at each school [photos above].

It has always been our goal to speak with young people regarding peace and the importance of treating others with respect and compassion. The International Day of Peace was a proud day for our chapter.

Tim Keenan

VFP Chapter Reports

#055 – SANTA FE, NM



A small but intense contingent of members of the Joan Duffy VFP Chapter 55 in Santa Fe answered a short-notice call from an anti-nuke ally to gather in observation of the United Nations International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Tuesday, September 26, 2023. The event was called by Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety in conjunction with the week of anti-nuclear actions promoted by Defuse Nuclear War. The UN chose September 26 because that is the date in 1983 that USSR Lt. Col. Stanislov Petrov made the decision to not respond to an alert of incoming U.S. missiles. His hunch that it was a false alarm proved to be correct. Some call Petrov “the man who saved the world.”

Greg Corning

#057 – VERMONT

Will Miller VFP Chapter 57 joined a peace march and rally to Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders Office in Burlington, Vermont, on Wednesday, October 4. In coalition with CODEPINK, WILPF, and the Vermont Peace Antiwar Coalition (VPAC), we delivered a letter to Bernie asking him to meet with our coalition, to hear our call to end funding for the Ukraine War, and to work on a



Vermont VFP Chapter 57 founder Dave Ransom at the march and rally at Senator Bernie Sanders' Vermont office on Oct. 4, 2023.

negotiated settlement of the conflict. The coalition called out the senator for repeatedly refusing to respond or meet with Vermonters to discuss his support of the war in Ukraine.

Our march was joined by several members of Vermont's Bread and Puppet Theater troupe leading the crowd in the chant: “*What is war? What is war? Who profits? Who dies?*”

The Vermont march and rally was held in coordination with the actions of CODEPINK leader Medea Benjamin and other Vermonters who simultaneously staged a sit-in (and got arrested) at Bernie Sanders' D.C. office.

Senator Sanders has been steady in his support for the Ukrainian government, and has continued to call for the U.S. government to provide direct aid—including military aid—to Ukraine.

Bud Haas

#069 – SAN FRANCISCO, CA



VFP “Hoa Binh” Chapter 160 tour participants—most of them veterans of the American War in Viet Nam—entertain a group of Agent Orange kids (all born with Down Syndrome) at a daycare center in Da Nang. For the two musicians (on banjo and harmonica), this 2023 tour was their first time returning to Viet Nam since the war, over 50 years ago.

The world is in crisis: Gaza/Israel, Ukraine, climate catastrophe, and more. The greater SF Bay Area is home to 7 million people and has four VFP chapters. In San Francisco, we partner with CODEPINK and several other progressive organizations. Fall 2023 joint actions included an October 4 march and rally to war profiteer BlackRock, calling for diplomacy for Ukraine-Russia (knowing the controls are in U.S. hands); leafleting on October 7 at the annual Fleet Week, while Blue Angel jets screamed overhead; and other education and outreach activities.

Several of our members head up national projects and working groups. VFP's China Working Group is co-led by Mike Wong, vice president of both the VFP National Board and VFP Chapter 69. The Climate Crisis & Militarism Project steering committee includes Steve Morse (S.F. chapter treasurer) and

San Francisco Chapter 69 continued:

Vince Dijanich. Gerry Condon of Northern California, past president of the VFP National Board, provides leadership to VFP's Russia-Ukraine and Nuclear Abolition Working Groups as well as the national *Golden Rule* Peace Boat Project.

Our chapter sent off a 13-member VFP delegation to Viet Nam for this year's tour hosted by VFP ex-pat Chapter 160 October 14–29. For several of the vets, it was their first trip back since the war. Each delegate brought a minimum of \$1,000 for reparations. Started in 2012, the annual delegations resumed after a three-year pandemic hiatus. Look for another tour in 2024.

Nadya Williams and Steve Morse

#071 – SONOMA COUNTY, CA

It has been a few years since Sonoma County VFP Chapter 71 participated in the Petaluma “Veterans Day” Parade. It's quite a large parade and it takes almost two hours to complete. The last time, we were placed at the end. But this time, we were placed near the beginning! We received a great deal of cheers, applause, and peace signs! We handed out more than 200 flyers (the one provided by VFP) explaining our Reclaim Armistice Day campaign. The local newspaper, *The Press Democrat*, mentioned us in their article the next day, but did not include us in their gallery of photographs. (See our photos below.)

We got the word out to the activist community and were joined by several people who are not with VFP, ranging in age from 12 to 80+! Some of our allies even purchased VFP shirts to wear in the parade! There were more of them than of us, swelling our ranks to more than 15 total.

Peace & solidarity!

Susan Collier Lamont

#075 – PHOENIX, AZ

Members of the recently renamed Mark Von Hagen–George Mizo Chapter of VFP conducted an outdoor memorial service at the Japanese Friendship Garden in Phoenix, Arizona, on September 1, 2023, in remembrance of the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. The garden's pastoral setting made for a beautiful and successful event.

Chapter spokesperson Richard A. Smith discussed several issues during the hour-long event. These included the long-debunked rationale for using nuclear weapons against Japan (one million U. S. casualties if the U. S. invaded the Japanese homeland), praise for the brilliance and accuracy of the movie *Oppenheimer*, and a request that those in attendance write a letter to Senator Mark Kelly and request that he introduce a Senate version of House Resolution 77 (HR 77), which calls on the president to embrace the provisions of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted by 122 countries on July 7, 2017.

Finally, on Veterans Day 2023, Phoenix chapter members returned to the Changing Hands Bookstores in Phoenix and Tempe to distribute poppies, reminding store patrons of the significance of Armistice Day. In addition, we provided copies of HR 77 and urged patrons write to Senator Kelly and request that he introduce a Senate version of the resolution.

Richard A. Smith

#089 – NASHVILLE, TN

The Hector Black Chapter in Nashville, Tennessee, was active over the summer of 2023, and we continue to work towards peace. We have held monthly protests against the U.S. war machine and our country's involvement in overseas wars since July. We stand on the sidewalk and hold up banners and signs so that drivers and passersby may constantly be aware

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On November 11, 2023, Sonoma County VFP members and allies participated in the Petaluma Veterans Day Parade. LEFT: Clint Gilbert, chapter liaison with the parade organizers. CENTER (L to R): Karen Nyhus (local activist), Fred Ptucha (president), Dominick Favuzzi (vice president), unknown (sorry!), and Susan Lamont (associate member). RIGHT: Chapter 71 Treasurer Terence McNeill and his wife Judy.

VFP Chapter Reports

Nashville, Tennessee, Chapter 89 continued:



In September members of the Hector Black VFP Chapter 89 took part in a big climate rally in Nashville, Tennessee, drawing the connection between militarism and the climate crisis.

of the omnipresence of U.S. imperialism. We also hand out literature and engage in discussions with people walking by about the true impacts of war on the USA and the world.

Chapter members Jim Wohlgenuth and Harvey Bennett have also maintained Veterans For Peace Radio, an interview program on which they and their guests discuss issues relevant to service members and veterans. Chapter members also participated in the Tomato Arts Festival in August, a multi-day local street festival celebrating the fruit in East Nashville. We talked to our fellow Nashvillians about our organization and about war. We also made our presence known at the Labor Day Parade and at a large climate rally that took place in September in downtown Nashville.

Ronda Shelton



STREAM Hector Black VFP Chapter 89 Veterans For Peace Radio, hosted by Jim Wohlgenuth and Harvey Bennett, at soundcloud.com/user-55976759

#091 – SAN DIEGO, CA

The Hugh Thompson Memorial Chapter in San Diego had an active summer. Our most recurring event (11 times) was our demonstration against the USMC Miramar Air Show, the largest in the country. We hoisted large banners on one of the city's busiest freeways, wrote articles and letters to the editor of the *Union Tribune* and other papers, spoke at local colleges and presented to climate-action groups. We hope to have convinced more and more people in San Diego that the annual air show is not warranted, due to its militaristic theme, its negative impact on the climate, the danger the Blue Angels bring, and all the noise and pollution the weeklong show brings to the city.

Additionally, chapter members spoke at several universities here about the impact of climate change brought about by the U.S. military, the single largest institutional producer of fossil fuel pollution on the planet. San Diego VFP members continue to be active in supporting VFP Chapter 182 in Tijuana, and our chapter has donated generously to DVAP's continued work. As the weather cools, we will again be hitting the streets with sleeping bags and other items to provide the homeless folks here with just a little warmth and support. We again hosted our "Arlington West" memorial on the grassy lawn in front of the USS Midway Museum on Armistice Day.

Gilbert Field

#102 – MILWAUKEE, WI

We were honored and lucky to have the *Golden Rule* in Milwaukee for four days over Labor Day weekend, effectively raising public awareness of the threat of nuclear weapons proliferation. A broad coalition of 15 peace and justice, religious, and community organizations joined in co-sponsoring the visit, which came near the end of the boat's 13-month voyage. A welcoming news conference featuring the mayor and labor council president attracted four TV outlets and reached a wide audience. There was a steady flow of visitors at Lakeshore State Park over the weekend, highlighted by a party with four folk musicians and the Raging Grannies from Madison and Milwaukee. We were joined by several members of VFP chapters in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa.

We then turned our attention to preparing for our 17th annual Armistice Day event at City Hall, featuring CODEPINK's



Above: Captain Kiko Johnston-Kitazawa, crew member Hugh Tomforde, musician McNamery, County Supervisor Steven Shea, Milwaukee Area Labor Council President Pam Fendt, and Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson listening to a press conference held during the Golden Rule's Labor Day weekend visit. The mayor presented a framed Proclamation to Project Manager Helen Jaccard after declaring "Golden Rule Days" in Milwaukee.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Chapter 102 continued:

Medea Benjamin and Mark Denning, an educator on Native American history and culture.

With other allies, we are working to win passage of a “Back from the Brink” resolution by the Milwaukee Common Council in coming months.

Bill Christofferson

#105 – BALTIMORE, MD

On October 12, for the first time in years, members of the Baltimore Phil Berrigan Memorial VFP Chapter 105 met face to face. Several new members couldn't attend, but were enthusiastic that we met, and joined us at the next in-person meeting in January. We are proud to have attracted several dynamic, inspired new members and national fundraisers last spring when we hosted the *Golden Rule* peace sailboat.

We held our regular Armistice Day vigil at 11 am on Saturday, November 11, at a busy downtown intersection. We are hoping the city arts council can get re-organized to again coordinate the traditional MLK Parade in January, after COVID years and a crazy last-minute cancellation and reinstatement last January. We agreed to join the pledge to act if/when Julian Assange is extradited. Ellen reported on the 50th birthday gathering for Jonah House, our chapter namesake Phil Berrigan and Elizabeth McAlister's intentional peace activist and social service community house in west Baltimore.

Ellen Barfield

#112 – VENTURA COUNTY, CA

Ventura chapter members again attended the weekend Redbird Powwow at Oxnard College this past summer. Many veterans were asked to say a few words in the sacred circle on Sunday. The air was thick with the differing personal sacrifices many veterans endured during their tours.

A Zoom meeting with U.S. Rep Salud Carbajal was held with other organizations seeking to get support for House Resolution 77, a resolution embracing the goals and provisions of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

On behalf of VFP, veteran member Michael Cervantes was invited to speak to Altrusa International of Oxnard at their September meeting, themed for the International Day of Peace. Chapter 112 made the annual fall review allowing the chapter to place military alternative brochures in nine high school career centers.

We attended the City of Ojai's International Day of Peace remembrance in September and the Oxnard Multicultural Festival in October, displaying VFP signage complementing the sentiments of community members here.

Shane Meserve



*VFP Baltimore Chapter 105 members (L to R):
John Sheehan, Dave Schott, Ellen Barfield, Madeleine Mysko.*

#113 – HAWAII

Members of Hawaii VFP Chapter 113 continue to challenge the U.S. military in Hawaii through their work with the Oahu Water Protectors and the Shut Down Red Hill Coalition to hold the U.S. Navy and Department of Defense accountable for the defueling of 104 million gallons of fuel that remain in the leaking 80-year-old underground fuel tanks, contaminating the drinking water of 93,000 residents.

Defueling of the tanks finally began on October 16, 2023, and if nothing goes wrong, will be completed in mid-January 2024. However, after the main fuel removal, anywhere from 100,000 to 400,000 gallons of fuel may remain in the low



points of the 3.5-mile pipe system and will be removed by Navy contractors in the following months, which the coalition will be demanding be done quickly and safely.

Chapter member Ann Wright has been to Maui several times as a Red Cross volunteer to assist survivors of the massive fire that destroyed Lahaina. Ann was also the keynote speaker for the August 6 Hiroshima Day events at Ground Zero for Nonviolent Action, located on the fence line of the huge nuclear submarine base in Bangor, Washington.

Ann Wright

#134 – TACOMA, WA

Tacoma VFP members kept busy this summer tabling at local events. We make ourselves available to passersby, offering flyers and brochures on various aspects of what Veterans For Peace does, and collecting names of new potential members. We've been at the 6th Avenue Street Fair, the Mosaic

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VFP Chapter Reports

Tacoma, Washington, Chapter 134 continued:

Festival, the Puyallup Fair, and Steilacoom Apple Squeeze Festival. As well, our president has made the rounds with various progressive signs at the local farmers market, a busy street corner, and the waterfront esplanade on a weekly basis.

Two Tacoma members joined forces with VFP Chapter 92 in Seattle to form a new group opposing local air shows featuring F-17 and F-18 fighter jets, called Blue Angels and Thunderbirds, as a means of reducing air and noise pollution. We're still holding a massive freeway banner over downtown Tacoma on Mondays that states: "END MILITARY ECOCIDE / VETERANS FOR PEACE."

We are grieving the loss of member Dave Zink, who died unexpectedly in July. His absence is keenly felt as he was a long-time enthusiastic member of our chapter, involved in almost everything we've done over the years.

Kristi Nebel

#161 – EASTERN IOWA

Recapping highlights from late 2022: Chapter 161 members were very involved welcoming the *Golden Rule* when the boat visited the east coast of Iowa, organizing events in Dubuque, Clinton, Davenport, Muscatine, Burlington, and Keokuk. Art Roche, who organized the events in Dubuque, which drew a crowd from the large Marshallese population there, was a *Golden Rule* crew member during the Atlantic voyage.

Armistice Day 2022 brought 50 folks to an outdoor gathering in hostile weather, followed by lunch and socializing and a local theater showing of *Slaughterhouse 5* that evening.

In 2023, we continued our annual tradition of community serial reading of MLK's "Beyond Vietnam" speech on April 4. In June, we participated in Iowa City's Pride Parade. The Iowa City VA Hospital also invited Chapter 161 to raise the Pride Flag over the VA campus on June 8. Treasurer Ross Porch played Assembly and Reveille, and many chapter members, patients, and staff attended.

Members greeted 10,000+ RAGBRAI bikers as they passed through Johnson County on their ride from the Missouri River to the Mississippi River. [RAGBRAI stands for Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa.]

Our chapter continues to sponsor the weekly Friday Peace Vigil outside Iowa's first state capitol. We have taken our roulette wheel (thanks John Fyotek and chapter president John Jadryev) and our "Too Close For Comfort" materials to the farmers market most Saturdays during the market season, May–October. The wheel gives people a chance to spin and read one of 24 times the world almost got nuclear disaster.

Three of our veterans passed away this year: Kenn Bowen (Viet Nam), Tom Baldrige (Korea), and Lloyd Epley (Korea).

Our 2023 Armistice Day event featured David Swanson and the documentary about Daniel Ellsberg, *The Most Dangerous Man in America*.

Ed Flaherty



Tacoma VFP Chapter 134 Vice President Marilyn Kimmerling chats with Washington State Legislative Speaker of the House Laurie Jenkins at the Hilltop Street Fair in Tacoma, Washington.

#178 – NORTHERN COLORADO

Our chapter's big news is our November 9, 2023, theatrical presentation (at the Lyric Cinema in Fort Collins) of *What I Want You to Know*, an award-winning documentary about our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by executive producer Travis Weiner, Iraq veteran and past president of our chapter. The screening was followed by a discussion with Travis and Benjamin Schrader. We are excited to see other VFP chapters to host screenings of this documentary. Find film information at: www.whatiwantyoutoknow-film.com/

Joseph Mondello



What I Want You to Know takes a courageous and unblinking look at the cost and consequences of war. The 13 veterans featured in the film went to war after 9/11 ostensibly to protect America, defend American freedoms, and help the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. The personal stories veterans share from their deployments, told with shocking candor, reveal very different truths about war.

2023 Japan Peace Speaking Tour

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and Japanese militaries. We explained that this is the result of unchecked militarism while Japan is intent on substantially increasing the size of its military.

Jenny Pacanowski's courageous talks on her military and post-military experiences encouraged and empowered many people in Japan, both young and old, male and female. Her explanations punctured people's preconceived notions regarding military service provided by the Japanese media and government. We also got to know VFP Japan's new member, Mayumi Uozumi, a former Japan SDF Army Sergeant and gifted speaker. Mayumi spoke not only as a female veteran, but also as a young mother who has protested against the incineration of radioactive rubble from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in 2011. Mayumi and Jenny had a powerful and deeply emotional exchange.

We were excited to meet Mr. Kazuaki Harada in person on the tour. For many decades, Mr. Harada has been studying Agent Orange and other toxic materials produced in Japan, some of which were stored or secretly discarded in various spots across Japan. Mr. Harada helped us to locate a place to sample water in Kokura, Kita-kyushu, one of the most polluted places in Japan.

It is a very sensitive business for us as U.S. citizens to criticize the newly constructed SDF bases in remote islands in Okinawa, considering the strong push from the Pentagon. Together with the twin bases in Korea (Jeju) and Okinawa (Henoko), these new SDF bases are part of a U.S. geostrategic plan to contain China. We had to be careful to avoid comments that might be construed as "meddling in Japan's domestic matters." So we were especially grateful to have Ken'ichi there to voice his opinion from a Japanese veteran's perspective. He could really say it! He worked a kind of magic with the audiences he addressed throughout the country.

Prior to the speaking tour in Japan, Rachel and Pat accompanied a director and cameraman from Okinawa TV on a trip from Maine to Florida, with Rachel serving as interpreter. With only two weeks' notice, we were able to arrange for interviews with several leaders in the fight against military PFAS contamination. In addition to East Coast activists, the Okinawan producers interviewed three of the

"This year's VFP Japan tour was a huge success in terms of publicizing the threat of PFAS on the mainland. Before, the majority of people did not know about it at all. Just recently, concerned residents in the Tama area in Tokyo, near the U.S. Yokota Air Base, started a civil society movement on PFAS. We have been working with them. Thanks to VFP's tour, the news about PFAS has spread through mainstream news outlets across the country. Several regions in Japan have started their own investigations and appeals to their local governments."

—Kunitoshi Sakurai, Professor Emeritus at Okinawa University, speaking during a October 21 Zoom meeting with tour supporters in Japan

world's top experts on PFAS: former National Institute of Environmental Health chief Linda Birnbaum; former EPA water chief Betsy Southerland; and Phillippe Grandjean, former head of Harvard's School of Public Health.

Pat and Rachel were filmed in Maryland taking a sample of contaminated water near a military base; then, during the tour, they were filmed sampling contaminated water near a military base in Okinawa. It was great to see both events in the same Okinawa TV newscast. The film crew also covered us as we collected samples throughout Okinawa. They are working on the production of a longer documentary on PFAS and fish contamination.

The tour also received coverage from numerous newspapers across Japan, and it is worth mentioning that the visit to the X-band radar station in Kyogamisaki was organized by a group of journalists. We strongly hope that coverage of our tour will provide a stepping stone to spread this movement beyond Japan so our brothers and sisters across Asia will realize that hosting U.S. military bases has deadly consequences.

Links to the two news segments produced by Okinawa TV:

youtu.be/qXr1J4K_uy8

youtu.be/vtaZG_m1hzo

[Set your YouTube screen for automatic "English translation."]

Links to videos provided by Matt Hoh:

On the Weapons Industry:

youtu.be/wCBpWnSfj_U

On the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement:

youtu.be/TsPcE_Y2BpE

A great resource for anyone interested in learning more: militarypoisons.org



VFP Japan member Ken'ichi Narikawa collects a water sample for analysis from a stream that drains from the U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Hansen in Okinawa, Japan. Often, surface waters and wastewaters draining from U.S. bases contaminate the water and fish with carcinogenic PFAS.

Ann Wright's prepared statement for UN Security Council

...continued from page 1

I was also a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and served in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia and Mongolia. I was on the small team that reopened the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, in December 2001. At the last four embassies, I was the Deputy Chief of Mission.

In Somalia, I was seconded to the United Nations Mission in Somalia, UNOSOM, in 1993–94 as the head of the Justice Division with the mission of reconstituting the Somali police, judicial and prison systems.

BUT, I resigned from the U.S. government 20 years ago in March 2003 in opposition to the U.S. war on Iraq, a war that, to its credit, the UN Security Council refused to authorize.

I recount my personal history to underscore my thorough familiarity with conflicts in various regions, and to share my view of the futility of relying on military action instead of diplomacy for conflict resolution.

As a retired U.S. Army Colonel and a former U.S. diplomat, I speak on my own behalf now as a very concerned U.S. citizen who as a taxpayer pays for the weapons my country uses and sells to fuel wars that kill innocent civilians.

On the topic of today, there is no doubt that weapons supplied into conflict areas have a detrimental effect on the prospects for settlement of conflicts. In fact, the continued supply of weapons will prolong any conflict.

The important question is, how do you get conflicts to end?

I will begin with a reminder that the process for ending wars begins with a ceasefire. The process can be very long and thousands of people—millions even—can be killed before there is an agreement on a ceasefire.

For example, during the Korean war from 1950–53, talks between parties to the conflict began in 1951 and finally concluded, after 575 meetings, with an armistice in 1953. During that war, over 4 million Koreans from the North and South, military and civilian, 500,000 Chinese military, 35,000 U.S. military and tens of thousands in the U.N military command were killed.

For our planet's situation today, on behalf of the MILLIONS of concerned citizens worldwide who have been demonstrating over the past two years for a CEASEFIRE in Ukraine, and for the past two-and-one-half months for a CEASEFIRE in Gaza, I say:

STOP THE KILLINGS! CEASEFIRE NOW! NEGOTIATE !

In the 70 days of the Israeli-Gaza conflict, over 18,000 Palestinians in Gaza have already been killed, 7,000 children and 4,000 women. An estimated 6,000 still under the rubble of their homes. 43,000 have been wounded. Over 260



Palestinians have been killed and 3,365 wounded during this period in the West Bank and thousands have been arrested and subjected to humiliating and degrading treatment.

The Israeli military has reported that 1,147 civilians in Israel and 418 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the horrific October 7 Hamas attack and the subsequent Israeli ground invasion of Gaza. We now know that the Israeli military knew of the pending attack and did not defend against it.

There has been only one six-day temporary ceasefire in the fighting, to allow for the release of hostages and release of Palestinian young detainees who were jailed without charges or trial.

This temporary ceasefire allowed for a very short time for a minuscule amount of medical, relief and food supplies to come into the Gaza ghetto for the 2.3 million who have been ordered by Israel into one-third of the area of the Gaza in forced displacement. WHO reports that Palestinians are starving.

Only 10 percent of the food to feed 2.3 million has been allowed into Gaza by Israel. Israel is again starving the people of Gaza as they did in 2006 when they infamously put "Gaza on a diet" and only allowed into Gaza food of a limited caloric value.

Food items such as pasta, flour, yeast, rice, salt, sugar, chickpeas, lentils, beans, olives, canned tuna and powdered milk were restricted or prohibited.

Sanitary items such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products, diapers, baby wipes, detergent and dish-washing liquid were also restricted or prohibited.

A 2012 joint report by Save the Children and UK-based Medical Aid for Palestinians revealed that 10% of children under the age of 5 experienced stunted growth due to prolonged malnutrition due to the Israeli blockade and siege on Gaza.

The same study revealed that 58.6% of Gaza's school children were anemic, as were more than 68% of children aged nine to 12 months and nearly 37% of pregnant women.

There is NO safe place left for Palestinians in Gaza from

the massive U.S.-supplied Israeli bombs, rockets and other munitions.

The targeting of the general population of Gaza and level of destruction of medical, academic, residential and commercial areas under the guise of eliminating Hamas is a textbook case of genocide and it must end now.

UN Secretary General Guterres invoked Article 99 and has warned: “Amid constant bombardment by the Israeli Defense Forces and without shelter or essentials to survive, I expect public order to completely break down soon, rendering even limited humanitarian assistance impossible.” He also warned of possible epidemics.

Last week, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken said there is a “gap between ... the intent to protect civilians, and the actual results that we’re seeing on the ground” in Gaza. Yet, three days ago, on Friday, December 8, in this very room, the U.S. vetoed a UN security council resolution for a humanitarian pause/ceasefire in the fighting in Gaza that would have protected civilians. This veto was, in my view, indefensible and WRONG.

The U.S. veto of the ceasefire in Gaza is a moral failure and a dangerous move that ensures continuation of the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

That U.S. veto does not reflect the view of the U.S. citizenry who want the killing in Gaza to end. The Biden administration is on thin ice with the American public on its support and protections of the Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.

The U.S. speaks of its shared values with Israel.

U.S. values do NOT include the bombing, shelling, destruction of hospitals, schools, universities, residential areas, water supplies, electrical networks, sewage networks, degrading behavior towards those who are still alive, and making return of 75% of Gazans to their homes purposely impossible—the genocide in the Gaza Ghetto.

U.S. values do not include 13,000 tank shells worth \$106 million to be immediately sent to Israel for shelling Palestinians civilians bypassing any congressional oversight.

Somehow the U.S. government, the President, White House, State Department, and Congress seem to have forgotten that everyone has the right to “Self-Defense.”

Israel is not the only country that can use that term.

Palestinians have the right to self-defense against 75 years of occupation, blockade, siege, quarantine, theft of lands, bombing of homes, hospitals, universities, schools, imprisonment without charges.

My remarks are NOT anti-semitic. They are honest assessments of the actions of the State of Israel and my own government, the United States.

This is not anti-semitism; it’s the description of the criminal actions that Israel and the United States are perpetrating on the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Today, the United States is providing weapons to two major conflicts: the one between Israel and Gaza, and the one between Russia and Ukraine.

The U.S. provides \$3.8 billion annually to the Israeli government for Israeli military use.

Now, the Biden administration has asked the U.S. Congress to approve another \$14 billion with virtually no restriction on their use against the people in Gaza.

On December 7, 2023, only four days ago, in a press conference with the new UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron, Secretary of State Tony Blinken said that over the last two years, the United States has provided \$70 billion to support Ukraine, and European allies have provided more than \$110 billion. Biden said, “If you look at the investments that we’ve made in Ukraine’s defense to deal with this aggression, 90 percent of the security assistance we’ve provided has actually been spent here in the United States with our manufacturers, with our production, and that’s produced more American jobs, more growth in our own economy. So this has also been a win-win that we need to continue,” Blinken said.

The win-win is not for civilians in conflict areas.

The win-win is for the military industrial complex and the politicians and retired government officials who receive senior positions in the weapons industry after their retirements!

In closing, I will read part of a poem that describes how some parents in Gaza have resorted to writing their children’s names on their legs to help identify them should either they, the parents, or the children be killed in Israeli bombing. It was written for the children of Gaza but is applicable to children in all conflict areas:*

WRITE MY NAME ON MY LEG, MAMA.

**Write my name on my leg, Mama
Use the black permanent marker
with the ink that doesn’t bleed
if it gets wet...**

**Write my name on my leg, Mama
and on the legs of my sisters and brothers.
This way we will belong together
This way we will be known
as your children.**

**Write my name on my leg, Mama
When the bomb hits our house
When the walls crush our skulls and bones
our legs will tell our story, how
there was nowhere for us to run**

—Zeina Azzam

On behalf of the people of the world who want to live in peace and safety, I say again:

**STOP THE KILLINGS! CEASEFIRE NOW!
NEGOTIATE ANY DISAGREEMENTS!**

*Read Zeina Azzam’s poem in its entirety at commondreams.org/further/this-is-how-we-live-people-come-together-die-together-are-buried-together-in-the-same-shroud



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