



VETERANS FOR PEACE

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March 30, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

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Dear President Trump,

We want our Peace Bonus.

As you may know, a bonus was promised to the American soldiers who fought World War I—the “war to end all war,” but they called it, “hell on earth.” More than their bonuses, those soldiers wanted peace. They gathered in Washington in 1932 to demand payment of their bonus, but they were met with violence, in their own nation’s capital, just for trying to claim what was rightfully theirs.

I am president of Veterans For Peace (VFP), a national organization of military veterans with a visceral understanding of war and its causes. We have come to believe in nonviolence as a more effective and humane response to conflict.

In 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. said prophetically, *“A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom.”*

I wish to convey our serious opposition to your administration’s policy of increasing the military budget while decreasing and even eliminating funding for vital social services.

As veterans, we have long recognized that increases to an already bloated Pentagon budget are what keep us in the business of war. We in VFP are not fooled into thinking that this budget makes our country any safer.

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Marine General Smedley Butler, two-time Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, pronounced, "War is a racket." We believe that and we are sick of it. Butler's sentiment is still resonant today. In the words of our own Matt Hoh, a former State Department official and Marine captain: "The killing, the organized murder we engaged in, benefitted only the profits of the defense corporations, the salaries of retired generals, and the terrorist groups themselves."

We speak for the majority of U.S. citizens, who believe your policies are taking innocent lives and endangering more of our young soldiers, who have already given so much in the needless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now we have sent more Marines into Syria. Your policies are also causing suffering and despair among immigrants, Muslims, communities of color, women, Native Americans, and LGBTQ communities, and if implemented, these policies will further destroy the environment. Ultimately, they make all of us considerably less secure.

Since these policies do nothing to promote human or planetary betterment, we are left to conclude they are intended to maintain and advance what has sadly become the global U.S. Empire—an empire that, like all empires of the past, exploits and oppresses other nations and the earth itself in order to increase the wealth and power of the very few. Meanwhile common people's lives become more and more impoverished.

We are now requesting that a delegation from Veterans For Peace be invited to meet with you in person to speak about your policies and how they affect peace, at home and abroad—with independent media present.

Like the bonus marchers of the 1930s, we demand our bonus. The bonus for our service and the many sacrifices of our comrades is peace.

Most sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry Ladendorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Barry Ladendorf, National President
Veterans For Peace
U.S. Navy, 1965-69