



2014 Position Statements

Veterans' Group Responds to President Senate's Attempt to Scuttle Diplomacy

Date: 1/17/14

Saint Louis – Veterans For Peace, a leading peace organization of military veterans, joined with seventy-one organizations to deliver a [joint letter](#) to the Senate on Tuesday urging Senators to oppose new Iran sanctions legislation, [S.1881](#). They say that the legislation would “critically endanger the possibility of a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear standoff with Iran, increasing the likelihood of a nuclear-armed Iran and an unnecessary and costly war.”

The [letter](#), organized by the National Iranian American Council, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and Win Without War, was signed by progressive groups including CREDO, MoveOn.org and Daily Kos; pro-Israel groups including Americans for Peace Now and J Street; and religious organizations including the United Methodist Church.

Veterans For Peace Interim Executive Director Michael McPhearson stated, “*After decades of ill will and mistrust between the U.S. and Iran, now is not the time to throw up barricades to building a new relationship. Apparently there are Senators who believe war is the answer to every international problem. The American people are war weary and wary. We want to continue to pursue a path to peace and not pave a road to war.*”

The organization has also issued a [position statement](#) rejecting the bill. The statement questions the hypocrisy of the U.S. government, which possesses the world's second largest nuclear arsenal behind Russia and is the only country in the world to have used nuclear weapons. The statement goes on to point out that the U.S. government never questions the nuclear weapons policy of Israel which is believed to have between 80 to 200 nuclear weapons and that Iran does not have even one.

The veterans' group urges the U.S. Senate to work for peace by calling for a Nuclear Weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East. and the reduction of U.S. nuclear stockpiles.

Patrick McCann, President of Veterans For Peace stated, “*Iran has good reason to mistrust the U.S. government. We encourage the American people to study the history of U.S. meddling in Iran, including the overthrow (at the prompting of British Petroleum) of the democratically-elected government of Mohammed Mossadegh in 1952, and see through the lies of the politicians, who serve those who covet Iran's oil.*”

Veterans For Peace urges its members and the general public to contact their Senator and

urge them to **vote NO** on the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2013 (S. 1881). VFP is urging members to visit their local and D.C. Senate offices. Many members of the group are organizing to participate in civil disobedience to support diplomacy and to lift voices of peace.

Veterans For Peace Says No to New Sanctions on Iran, Bill S. 1881

Date: 1/17/14

Veterans For Peace views new Iran sanctions legislation, [U.S. Senate bill S. 1881](#) as an unnecessary provocation, a beating of the war drums. We question why politicians push this legislation at a time when new Iranian leadership seems to be on a road to moderation. We categorically reject [S. 1881](#) and call for our government to seek negotiations, not war and sanctions.

We, in Veterans For Peace, reflect on the many recent debacles of our government in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. And understand that we haven't seen anything like what we will see if our government, prompted by multi-national oil companies, attempts military action against Iran. We view economic sanctions as a step towards war, and are reminded of the role sanctions played in the lead-up to war on Iraq.

We are offended by the hypocrisy of the U.S. government, who possesses the world's second largest nuclear arsenal behind Russia, has recently begun upgrading nuclear arms delivery systems and is the only country in the world to have used nuclear weapons. The U.S. government never questions the nuclear weapons policy of Israel, a 2 hour flight from Iran, which is believed to have between 80 to as many as 200 nuclear weapons. Iran does not have even one nuclear weapon and U.S. intelligence has concluded that Iranian leadership has not decided to pursue a nuclear weapon.

Instead of adding fuel to an already volatile situation, the U.S. Senate should work for peace by calling for a Nuclear Weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East and the reduction of U.S. nuclear stockpiles to give credibility to the U.S. position as it negotiates for a peaceful solution.

We encourage the American people to study the history of U.S. meddling in Iran, including the overthrow (at the prompting of British Petroleum) of the democratically-elected government of Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953, and see through the lies of the politicians, who serve those who covet Iran's oil.

Veterans Applauds “Pivot to Diplomacy” But Calls for Peace-Centered Policy

Date: 1/29/14

Now is the time for peace, and for healing the wounds of war!

Statement of Veterans For Peace,

As veterans of World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the U.S. wars and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, we listened very carefully to President Obama's State of the Union speech. We listened for words of peace. **We listened for signs that our wounded warriors will receive much needed care. We listened hoping that our homeless veterans would soon have roofs over their heads.**

The most remarkable part of President Obama's speech came at the end, when he honored a soldier who was wounded and left severely disabled by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan. Sergeant First Class Corey Remsburg was a guest of First Lady Michelle Obama in the balcony and bravely basked in the adulation of all present.

We, in Veterans For Peace cannot help but have mixed reaction when wounded soldiers are put on public display. It is a good thing that the American people are reminded of the huge price paid by service members and military families when our politicians send them to fight in faraway lands. Tens of thousands of men and women warriors have been severely scarred for life, physically, psychologically and spiritually. An epidemic of suicides continues to ravage active duty troops and veterans.

President Obama promised to “keep slashing that backlog so our veterans receive the benefits they've earned and our wounded warriors receive the health care – including the mental health care – that they need.”

Veterans and military families know that this is not always the case. **Many veterans of the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan continue to be denied much needed benefits and healthcare, especially mental health care.** In fact, the Army is giving less-than-honorable discharges to many soldiers with PTSD, thus withholding from them both benefits and healthcare.

This practice is particularly despicable, given that the rallying cry for these unjust military adventures has been “Support the Troops.” **Is President Obama committing himself to do more for our wounded veterans, or is he continuing the hypocritical charade?**

The American people have long called for the end of the wars initiated in our name in the Middle East. Iraq has been pretty much destroyed, and now is daily suffering from the sectarian violence unleashed by the U.S. occupation. Afghanistan is certainly no better off after suffering the dubious distinction of being “America's longest war.” The people of Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia are outraged by regular U.S. drone attacks in their countries. U.S. support for rebels in Libya and Syria continue to reap chaos and death.

The failure of U.S. dependency on military force has not been lost on the American people, especially veterans and military families, large majorities of whom opposed Obama's stated plans to bomb Syria. We are grateful that President Obama listened to the people, and canceled the bombing.

We are equally grateful that President Obama is pursuing a diplomatic solution with Iran. We support his pledge to veto any bill that crosses his desk calling for additional economic sanctions against Iran, which would most assuredly undermine diplomacy, possibly leading to war.

We also support the President's appeal to Congress to lift remaining restrictions on detainee transfers to close the Guantanamo Bay prison. Veterans For Peace will continue to work with our allies to push Congress to heed the President's call.

If President Obama does not want his legacy to be one of war, but rather to be seen as the president who extracted the U.S. from wars in the Middle East, Veterans For Peace applauds this pivot to diplomacy. And we call for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops and so-called contractors from Afghanistan. Not one more Afghani civilian or U.S. soldier should die in this dubious occupation. Veterans For Peace does not support Obama's goal of maintaining U.S. bases and 10,000 or more U.S. troops in Afghanistan, even after the supposed end of the U.S. war.

President Obama stressed that he can take executive action when his policy goals are obstructed by a recalcitrant Congress. **Veterans For Peace strongly encourages him to take the following executive actions, which are fully within his power: pardon Chelsea Manning, a soldier who has been sentenced to 35 years in prison for revealing U.S. war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. And drop all charges against Edward Snowden, who has revealed the true costs of the American security state upon the privacy and civil rights of U.S. citizens.**

Finally, **Mr. President, end these wars once and for all, and bring all those war dollars home. Provide veterans with all the care they need and deserve, including housing for thousands of homeless veterans.** We need those precious dollars for jobs, education, healing and housing. To do this, the U.S. must have a new foreign policy with mutual cooperation and diplomacy as its main tools. **Abolish war!**

Military Veterans' Peace Group Responds to President Obama's State of the Union Speech

Date: 1/29/14

Saint Louis – Veterans For Peace, a leading peace organization of military veterans, released a statement (*full statement - see entry above*) today responding to President Obama's 2014 State of the Union Speech. The statement applauds the president's pivot to diplomacy and supports his calls to Congress to support diplomatic initiatives with Iran and to close the Guantanamo Bay prison, but the veterans' group also calls on the President to, **"take the following executive actions, which are fully within his power: pardon Chelsea Manning, a soldier who has been sentenced to 35 years in prison for revealing U.S. war crimes U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan. And drop all charges against Edward Snowden, who has revealed the true costs of the American security state upon the privacy and civil rights of U.S. citizens."**

The statement (*full statement - see entry above*) reflected a mixed reaction about the honoring of Sergeant First Class Corey Remsburg. "It is a good thing that the American people are reminded of the huge price paid by service members and military families when our politicians send them to fight in faraway lands." However, "This practice is particularly despicable, given that the rallying cry for these unjust military adventures has been "Support the Troops." Is President Obama committing himself to do more for our wounded veterans, or is he continuing the hypocritical charade?"

Veterans For Peace recently joined seventy-one organizations to deliver a [joint letter](#) to the Senate urging Senators to oppose new Iran sanctions legislation, S.1881. They say that the legislation would "critically endanger the possibility of a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear standoff with Iran, increasing the likelihood of a nuclear-armed Iran and an unnecessary and costly war."

VFP has also been a longtime advocate to close Guantanamo Bay.

Interim Executive Director Michael McPhearson stated, "*We will support all efforts to close the Guantanamo Bay prison and to continue diplomacy with Iran. It is a very good thing that the President is moving in this direction. But it is not enough. We need a new foreign policy that relies on diplomacy and mutual cooperation, and not war. While this is a good beginning, we need to hear a plan for diplomacy and shifting of resources away from war to domestic needs.*"

Veterans For Peace Responds to the Conviction and Imprisonment of VFP Member Gregory Boertje-Obed and the Transform Now Plowshares Activists, Sr. Megan Rice and Michael Walli

Date: 2/21/2014

Our highest commendations are sent with gratitude and love to VFP member Gregory Boertje-Obed and his courageous and noble colleagues, Sr. Megan Rice, SHCJ and Michael Walli, members of Transform Now Plowshares for their extraordinary actions to expose the on-going criminal activity of the US government at the Y-12 nuclear processing facilities in Oak Ridge, TN. We send also our love and support to their families and friends.

Veterans For Peace, in the strongest possible terms, condemns the convictions and imprisonment of these concerned citizens, (two US Veterans and one 84-year-old Roman Catholic nun) and calls for their immediate release.

The intent and success of their nonviolent action, to expose and make known the criminal enterprise of nuclear weapons production and modernization of US nuclear weapons stockpiles by the US government at the Y-12 complex in Oak Ridge, TN and other nuclear facilities, in clear violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has called us as a nation and an organization to self-reflection and examination.

To honor this extraordinary sacrifice of the Transform Now Plowshares activists, and to help ensure a future for all of humanity, VFP National calls upon its membership to insist on the implementation of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and move toward the abolition of these unconscionable weapons.

Michael T. McPhearson
Veterans For Peace
Interim Executive Director

VFP Statement on Attack by Egyptian Police on Medea Benjamin

Date: 3/6/14

Veterans For Peace are appalled that Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink, a U.S. citizen, and member of Veterans For Peace has been brutally attacked and injured by Egyptian police as she entered Egypt to join an international women's peace delegation to Gaza. Medea's arm was fractured by five Egyptian police officers and her shoulder dislocated as they threw her to the ground and handcuffed her after being detained for 7 hours along with four others with no reason given - ever.

Calling from Istanbul, Benjamin gave the following statement: "I was brutally assaulted by Egyptian police, who never said what I was being accused of. When the authorities came into the cell to deport me, two men threw me to the ground, stomped on my back, pulled my shoulder out of its socket and handcuffed me so that my injured arm was twisted around. I was then forced to sit between the two men who attacked me on the plane ride from Cairo to Istanbul, and I was (and still am) in terrible pain the whole time."

Equally deplorable, is the failure of the U.S. Embassy to provide any assistance whatsoever even after being called repeatedly to at least help get Medea medical care. They told U.S. citizens, the women from the delegation, "You are on your own."

We condemn this action by the Egyptian government through their police and equally condemns the U.S. State Department for their complicity through inaction. **We urge everyone to call and/or email the Egyptian Embassy at [202 895-5400](tel:2028955400) and Embassy@egyptembassy.net to voice your outrage and demand that those accountable be held responsible.** Ask for justice for Medea, that they release the delegation from the airport and let them go to Gaza, and stop cracking down on journalists and Egyptian activists.

Veterans For Peace Denounces the Proposed Budget Released Yesterday by Rep. Paul Ryan

Date: 4/2/14

President Obama's proposed budget sends a whopping 57% of discretionary spending to the military, but Ryan goes even further. From a slightly smaller overall budget, Ryan grants an additional \$25 billion to the military. In constant dollars, both proposals leave a 'peacetime' military budget the size it was at the height of the Viet Nam war. It is irrational to increase military spending at a time when we are downsizing the military.

Ryan subsidizes his lopsided budget in the familiar way: he cuts Medicare, programs aimed at combating climate change, Pell Grants to support college students and turns Medicaid and food stamps over to the states with limited federal block grants. It is irrational and very unfair to ask poor and working people to go without the necessities of life so that we can put more money in the pockets of defense contractors.

Most astonishing is that this shift of resources from meeting human needs and building our society is incredibly wasteful in its stated purpose, to prepare for warfighting. In 1996 the government began to require auditing of all government departments. The Pentagon is the only federal agency that has not complied with this law and in that time has not been able to account for \$8.5 trillion in taxpayer money. <[Special Report: The Pentagon's doctored ledgers conceal epic waste](#)>

There is no accountability in Washington DC, from Democrats or Republicans to end the failed policy of endless war nor of the wasteful spending that starves our nation of resources for job creation, education, healthcare and all the investment in people we need for a peaceful and prosperous society.

The human cost of such a budget is too high. We can do better.

Based on reporting in The Hill.

Veterans For Peace Responds To Fort Hood Shootings

Date: 4/4/14

Calls for Better Healthcare for GI's and Veterans, and an End to U.S. Militarism

Veterans For Peace members **are greatly saddened** by the tragic soldier-on-soldier shootings this week at Fort Hood, Texas. Our deepest condolences go to the families of the four soldiers who were killed, including the alleged shooter, Spc. Ivan A. Lopez.

We are also concerned about the impact of the shooting on Fort Hood soldiers and their families, who have already suffered so much from multiple deployments to the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

This is not the first time that Ft. Hood soldiers have been under attack on the sprawling Army base. Five years ago, Major Nidal Hassan carried out an even greater massacre against soldiers who were preparing to deploy to Afghanistan, killing 13 and injuring 30. Last year, Major Hassan was convicted of murder and sentenced to death.

If there is any silver lining to this latest outbreak of violence, it is that it provides an opportunity for our society to take another look at the plight of over two million men and women who have deployed to war in recent years. It is heartening to see that there is major media coverage in outlets from the New York Times and National Public Radio to Al Jazeera and Democracy Now. Pointed questions are being asked about the adequacy of mental health services in the military, the routine dispensing of addicting medications, the epidemic of military suicides, and the reluctance of military doctors to give a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which brings with it costly lifetime disability benefits.

We agree with our fellow veterans at Under The Hood Cafe and Outreach Center and Iraq Veterans Against War who are calling for common sense reforms of medical and mental health care treatment, as detailed in the forthcoming Fort Hood Report. We join them in calling for better, saner treatment for wounded GI's and veterans. We must continue to press the military to take responsibility for treating the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual wounds of war, instead of throwing soldiers aside like they were damaged equipment. Our GI's and veterans deserve better than that. There is also an urgent need to end the "suck it up" culture of the military, especially prevalent in combat arms units, so that service members and veterans will feel free to seek much needed mental healthcare.

As an organization whose mission is to abolish war, Veterans For Peace cannot help but make other observations as well. For more than a decade, the U.S. government and military has visited massive, indiscriminate violence, death and destruction upon the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is all but inevitable that the violence of wars and occupations in faraway lands follows our soldiers back home, where it explodes in many different forms, from drug and alcohol addiction and domestic violence to murder and suicide.

Yes, our government can and should do a much better job of "Supporting The Troops," a phrase that was cynically used to silence those who questioned the wisdom, legality and morality of launching wars of choice. In the final analysis, soldiers and their families, as well as the society at large, will continue to experience violence at home as long as the U.S.

continues with a militaristic foreign policy abroad. It is high time to abolish war once and for all. Veterans For Peace is rededicating ourselves to this goal.

Michael Prysner, VFP Board member, pierces the veil that the corporate mass media refuses to look behind -- the horror story of how the US military treats vets; and how the shooting at Ft. Hood is one symptom of the disrespect and lack of appropriate attention given to veterans in article found on Popular Resistance website entitled, "[Shooting At Fort Hood Not A Surprise To This Veteran](#)"

Quote from **Michael T. McPhearson, VFP Interim Executive Director**, that appeared in Huffington Post article entitled, "[Vets Respond To Fort Hood Shooting: Let's End The Stigma Around Mental Health Issues](#)"

"We need to help people understand: There isn't something wrong with you. There is something right with you," Michael McPhearson, Gulf War veteran and executive director of Veterans For Peace said. "We need to help you get past what's going on."

Diane Rejman, VFP Life Time Member and member of VFP South Bay/Peninsula Chapter 101 in California vents her frustration and anger in Counterpunch article, entitled, [The Fort Hood Shooting and PTSD](#). Diane states, "We are a society in denial. Denial about the horrors of war and its effects on a soldier, who was first a human being".

In an [interview with PressTV](#) **Leah Bolger, past board president and member of VFP Corvallis OR Chapter 132**, tells reporter, "The US has failed to provide proper services to the war veterans suffering from a wide range of traumas caused by their experiences in the battlefield".

Iraq vet, **Jon Turner**, hopes are that those who have served in times of peace and times of war, will be willing to recognize that there might be underlying issues that have contributed to their behaviors since returning home....<[More](#)>

Veterans For Peace Statement on Environmental Costs of War

Date: 4/21/14

When you think about war, do you think about the environment? War wastes and destroys natural resources. Before the first bullet is fired, preparation for war requires the extracting and processing of metals, wood, and petroleum to build infrastructure, manufacture equipment, and develop advanced weaponry. Testing for chemical and nuclear weapons, for example, has left irreversible damage to the environment, along with causing extensive radioactive damage to people in communities near the mining, manufacturing, and test sites.

During war, increased production, infrastructure destruction, and accelerated fuel use are only a handful of the consequences. It is a fact that the U.S. Pentagon is the largest consumer of oil in the world. By one estimate, the U.S. military used [1.2 million barrels](#) of oil in Iraq in just one month in 2008. This increased rate of fuel use compared to non-wartime has to do, in part, with the fact that fuel must be delivered to vehicles in the field by other vehicles, using even more fuel. During the Gulf War in 1991, in an effort to stop a landing of U.S. Marines, the Iraqi military dumped roughly [1.5 million tons of oil](#) into the Persian Gulf. By the time Saudi authorities and international contractors initiated clean-up efforts, much of the oil had sunk, evaporated or washed up on beaches and the oil slicks had catastrophic and lasting impact on wildlife.

After a war, the host country is left in disarray. While infrastructure isn't part of the natural environment, its destruction has lasting impacts. Water systems and land are contaminated, villages are destroyed, people and animals are displaced or killed, and ecosystems are permanently damaged.

Historically, a "scorched earth" military strategy has been common practice in war, even before modern technological advances. This strategy involves destroying everything that could be useful for an enemy, while advancing through an area. The goal is to starve citizens, destroy cropland, and pressure the enemy into surrender. One common example of this strategy is the use of Agent Orange, when the U.S. military [sprayed 20 million gallons](#) of chemical herbicides and defoliants in Vietnam. Agent Orange has had long-lasting effects on Vietnam's water supply and ecosystem. Although Agent Orange is now banned, many other chemical defoliants are still being used today. Depleted Uranium, the most controversial of recent chemical weapons, has also been found to have long-lasting impacts on human health and soil.

The list of destruction resulting from war goes on and on. From the preparation for war to war-fighting and the aftermath, the environment pays a toll. This Earth Day, members of Veterans For Peace are speaking out on environmental damages associated with endless war. As Veterans For Peace, we are committed to exposing the true costs of war and militarism, including the cost to the environment.

Veterans For Peace: No War Over Ukraine!

Date: 4/29/14

Veterans For Peace Calls For Peaceful Resolution of Ukraine Crisis

The crisis in Ukraine is escalating to the point where a new Cold War threatens to become a hot war between nuclear-armed powers. How did we get here and what can we do to avoid war?

1. In February of this year, the U.S. government supported the violent overthrow of the elected president of Ukraine, after he decided against entering into an exclusive economic and political agreement with the European Union. Hundreds of thousands of people in western Ukraine were in the streets calling for the president to step down, for a variety of reasons including corruption. But extreme right-wing nationalist militias led the mob violence that sent the president packing, and neo-fascist leaders now hold key positions in the U.S.-backed government in Kiev, including overseeing the military and police.
2. Russia responded by facilitating the annexation of Crimea, historically part of Russia and home to its Black Sea naval fleet. The insertion of Russian troops into Crimea was a violation of international law, and thus the popular referendum on annexing to Russia can be called into question. But the massive participation in the referendum, with over 90% approving annexation to Russia, appears to accurately reflect the sentiment of the Crimean people, and was followed by widespread dancing in the streets. No Russian tanks. Crimea had been part of Ukraine only since 1954, when it was so ordered by Russian president Nikita Krushchev, without the consent of the people of Crimea.
3. The largely Russian-speaking population of eastern Ukraine does not accept the new coup government in Kiev, and armed groups have seized many government buildings, variously calling for more autonomy within Ukraine, outright independence, or annexation to Russia. Many people in western Ukraine also remain in the streets, some supporting the interim government, while others are reportedly wary of the coup government and waiting for democratic elections, promised for late May.
4. Some Ukrainian Army units sent to take back government buildings in eastern Ukraine have been disarmed and/or have refused to attack their fellow countrymen.
5. Russian-speaking militants attempting to take over a military base in eastern Ukraine were repelled, several were killed and others arrested. A checkpoint manned by Russian-speaking militias was attacked, killing three to six men, and wounding several others. Right-wing militias were accused, but have denied responsibility for the attack.
6. An interim peace agreement between the U.S., Russia, the European Union and the government in Kiev quickly fell apart, as resistance groups in eastern Ukraine were not invited to participate and have not agreed to abandon their occupation of government buildings. President Obama is accusing Russia of not calling on pro-Russian militants in eastern Ukraine to stand down.
7. Two weeks ago the head of the CIA made a "secret" mission to Kiev, followed last week by Vice President Joseph Biden. New raids by the Ukrainian Army in eastern Ukraine began shortly after Biden's visit. The new regime in Kiev, considered illegitimate by many Ukrainians, is to receive one billion dollars in loan guarantees, courtesy of U.S. taxpayers.

8. NATO has announced that it is building up its air, naval and ground forces in eastern Europe. Dominated by the U.S., NATO has steadily expanded to incorporate former states of the Soviet Union, despite earlier promises to Russia that this would not happen.
9. Russia, incensed by the West's blatant – if botched - attempt to expand its sphere of influence into traditional Russian strongholds, is reported to have as many as 40,000 troops stationed near its border with Ukraine.
10. Six hundred U.S. soldiers have been sent to Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. They are from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, based in Vicenza, Italy. This is a rapid response unit that played a key role in the March 2004 invasion of Iraq and saw major combat in Afghanistan. Six hundred troops is not a lot, but NATO's top military commander, U.S. Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, has publicly discussed the option of sending a 4,500-member American combat brigade from Fort Hood, Texas, to Europe.
11. U.S. media coverage of the “Crisis in Ukraine” has been little more than one-sided propaganda, portraying Russian President Putin as the aggressor and providing no historical context whatsoever.
12. Right-wing militarists in the U.S. are calling for U.S. troops in Ukraine, while President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry implement economic warfare (“sanctions”) and institute a renewed policy of isolating and “containing” Russia, aka Cold War II.
13. President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry have avoided making comments about fascistic, anti-Semitic leaders who are now part of the government in Kiev. Only after forged fliers were attributed to a pro-Russia resistance group in eastern Ukraine, did John Kerry denounce the “obscenity” of anti-Semitism.
14. Loan guarantees from the U.S., EU and International Monetary Fund will require further privatization in Ukraine and a great burden of austerity to be imposed upon its people.

In our Statement of Purpose, Veterans For Peace promises “to restrain our government from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations.”

What we are seeing in Ukraine is a classic example of covert U.S. intervention and “regime change,” very similar to current goings-on in Venezuela, where the U.S. government is supporting street violence aimed at overthrowing another democratically elected government.

Whether or not U.S. and Russian leaders intend it, this covert war threatens to become an overt war with every rhetorical, economic and military escalation. As we know, wars are all too easy to start, even by accident, but very difficult to stop. Russia, feeling existentially threatened and bullied on its own border, is unlikely to back down. It is our responsibility as Veterans For Peace to help pull our own government back from the abyss.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HEAD OFF WAR?

1. Rather than succumb to outlandishly one-sided propaganda in the U.S. mass media, we will counter it by telling the truth, to our neighbors, to our local media, through our own media and through public actions.
2. We will tell our elected leaders and the general public that we absolutely oppose any U.S./NATO military intervention in Ukraine or attack on Russia.

3. We believe that the U.S., the European Union and right-wing extremists in Ukraine bear much of the responsibility for the current crisis. Even so, we call upon Russian leaders to take steps to de-escalate this crisis and avoid a new war between nuclear-armed powers.
4. We also oppose economic warfare ("sanctions") against Russia. Economic warfare is a violation of international law, in part because it is a form of collective punishment that most often hurts the poor, the very young and the very old. As we saw with Iraq, economic sanctions, rather than being an alternative to military action, can actually be a prelude to all-out war.
5. We oppose shoring up the illegitimate government of Ukraine with billions of U.S. tax dollars that would better be spent on much needed social programs here in the U.S., such as food security, housing and healthcare for GI's and veterans who have been physically and psychologically wounded by war.
6. We will seek out allies in the peace movement, both in the U.S. and internationally, and make urgent common cause to head off a dangerous war involving the U.S. and Russia, both nuclear-armed powers.
7. We will work to understand the varying interests of different national groups and regions within Ukraine, and encourage a nonviolent, diplomatic outcome to this dangerous crisis. Washington and its European allies ought to reverse course and turn Ukraine into a field of cooperation with Russia through a jointly supported bailout devoid of geopolitical motivation. Good relations with both Russia and the European Union are in the best interests of all the Ukrainian people. A just and peaceful resolution that averts the very real threat of war is in the interests of all the world's people.

**NO NEW WAR, NOT COLD, NOT HOT, NOT NUCLEAR!
NONVIOLENCE, DIPLOMACY AND COOPERATION WILL WIN THE DAY!**

Veterans For Peace Statement Welcoming Home Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl

Date: 6/10/14

*Delivered by Gerry Condon, VFP National Board Vice President
National Press Club and White House, Washington, DC*

Five more U.S. soldiers were killed in Afghanistan yesterday. They were killed by a NATO airstrike, so-called "friendly fire." Who is to blame for these deaths? Certainly not Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who did not order U.S. troops into an endless and pointless war in Afghanistan.

Veterans For Peace has had few opportunities to applaud the actions of President Obama. We are profoundly disappointed that the president has continued the aggressive foreign policies of the Bush Administration. But today we can thank President Obama for a couple steps in the right direction.

President Obama did the right thing when he brought home a U.S. prisoner of war from Afghanistan.

President Obama did the right thing when he released five Afghan prisoners of war from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo.

But President Obama did the wrong thing when he decided that U.S. troops will remain in Afghanistan for another 2-1/2 years, and then some. The deaths of five U.S. soldier yesterday is the kind of bad news we can expect as long as U.S. troops are in harm's way.

As Vietnam veteran John Kerry once famously said, "How do we ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake."

Veterans For Peace wants to speak directly to Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl:

We love you, Sgt. Bergdahl. We have great respect for you and your wonderful family. We are happy that you will be reunited soon!

Veterans For Peace also has a message for President Obama:

Mr. President, I am speaking for thousands of veterans from too many wars. We want you to bring ALL the troops home from Afghanistan! Bring them home now, and take good care of them when they get here.

And Mr. President, it is time to release all the prisoners of war from Guantanamo. End the torture, Shut Down Guantanamo now!

The American people are tired of war. We are ready to live in peace.

[June 10, 2014 Press Conference](#)

VFP Statement Against Israeli Assault on Gaza

Date: 7/26/14

2014 Veterans For Peace National Convention (Asheville, North Carolina)

As veterans who have witnessed the horror of war, we are deeply outraged by the State of Israel's slaughter of many innocent civilians in Gaza. The military assault against children, women and men, by air, by sea and now by land, is a clear violation of international laws of war and of human rights. Nearly 1,000 Palestinians have been murdered, almost all of them civilians, nearly a quarter of them children. Over 5,000 are wounded.

Veterans For Peace joins millions of people all around the globe who are shocked by this vicious, one-sided slaughter. We understand the huge injustice of the Israeli occupation. Palestinians have been ethnically cleansed from their homes and forced to live in the Occupied West Bank, or in the open-air prison that is Gaza.

We call on Israel to stop the massacre now! There should be an immediate end to all bombing and an immediate withdrawal of all Israeli military from Gaza. We join with the international community in calling for a cease-fire.

Veterans For Peace calls for an end to the inhumane 8-year siege of Gaza, so that normal trade and travel can occur, and so that residents of Gaza may have the basic necessities of life.

Veterans For Peace will push for an end to all military aid to Israel.

Veterans For Peace recommits itself to participating in the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel and Israeli products.

We encourage all parties to search for a nonviolent path to peace.

It is time to recognize the human rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return to the homes from which they were forced to flee in 1948.

Veterans For Peace applauds the courage of over 50 Israeli reservists who have publicly refused to fight in Gaza, or to serve in any military support roles whatsoever. We will attempt to make contact with these Israeli war resisters in order to help spread their message of peace and we will join in international efforts to protect them from repression by the Israeli government.

We encourage all Israeli soldiers to avoid becoming party to war crimes against innocent Palestinian civilians, and to consider all their options for standing on the side of humanity. **The peoples of Palestine, Israel and the world deserve to live in peace and harmony.** The ultimate goal of Veterans For Peace is to abolish war. In the meantime, we stand ready to assist those Israelis and Palestinians who seek peace and reconciliation.

Approved overwhelmingly at 2014 VFP National Convention.

Veterans For Peace Demands Justice for Michael Brown Jr

Date: 8/15/14

Veterans For Peace offers its deep condolences to the family of Michael Brown Jr. and stands in solidarity with the family, the people of Ferguson and the Greater Saint Louis Region. We call for a complete, swift and transparent investigation. And we demand justice for Michael Brown Jr. and his family.

Veterans For Peace deplores all forms of violence. We call on the people of the region to continue to channel their anger towards building power, solidarity and creating change nonviolently. However, as we ask people work to direct their energies towards positive change, we reserve special outrage for state violence.

We are military veterans who once served the state as agents of violence, given the tools and authority to take the lives of the “enemy” and excused for taking the lives of innocent people in the name and interests of the state. We are able to recognize abuse of power and use of excessive force.

What happened in Ferguson, MO last Saturday and the aftermath of police over reaction to community expressions of grief and anger is the outcome of a national mindset that violence will solve any problem. Thirteen years of war has militarized our whole society. We see equipment designed for the battlefield used in our nation’s streets against our citizens. We see police in uniforms and using weapons indistinguishable from the military.

Week after week we see reports of police abuse and killings of innocent and unarmed civilians. And instead of fair and swift justice to ensure citizens can trust they are protected and served by the judicial system, time and time again we see police given impunity for their crimes and citizens left in disbelief wondering where to turn next. This injustice plagues diverse ethnic and “racial” communities, but the Black community has, historically and in present day, seen this abuse consistently and most intensely. Many people in Black communities across the nation have said they feel as if they live in a war zone.

The unrest in Ferguson and similar incidents of citizen rebellions are the outcome of state abuse and neglect, not of hoodlums. Eventually, any people who are held down will attempt to standup. They will struggle for their humanity. Paraphrasing Fredrick Douglas, this struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it will be a struggle. This is what we see in Ferguson today.

We cannot call for peace in the streets at home and at the same time conduct war for thirteen years in the streets of other nations. We cannot admonish youth for using violence to seek change when the U.S. uses bombs and drones as the primary tool to drive the change it wants. We agree with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.”

Peace at home will not be had if we do not seek peace at abroad. We must work for both. **Veterans For Peace will not be silent.**

VFP Demands Justice

- [Raging Grannies Sing for Michael Brown](#)
 - [VFP Member Offers De-Escalation Advice to Law Enforcement](#)
 - [Is the Ferguson Incident A Teachable Moment for the Nation?](#)
 - [Veterans Peace Team Arrives in Ferguson MO](#)
 - [Veterans For Peace Demands MO Gov Rescind Order to Deploy the National Guard to Ferguson](#)
 - [Solidarity Actions for Justice for Mike Brown, for Eric Garner, for Trayvon Martin, for Renisha McBride and so many more](#)
-

Veterans For Peace Demands MO Gov Rescind Order to Deploy the National Guard to Ferguson

Date: 8/18/14

Veterans For Peace is closely following developments in Ferguson, MO and the surrounding Saint Louis Region in the aftermath of the killing of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown Jr. by Darren Wilson, a Ferguson police officer. Having already called for de-escalation of the use of force against protestors and the unrest on Friday, Veterans For Peace members are outraged that Missouri Governor Jay Nixon has called in the National Guard, setting the stage for U.S. military and citizen confrontations.

Veterans For Peace calls on the Governor to rescind his order to deploy the National Guard and instead turn to real de-escalation tactics of talking to the community and moving forward with justice for Michael Brown Jr. Darren Wilson should be immediately brought into custody to help ensure his safety and reassure the public he cannot flee.

“This is appalling but not entirely surprising. The mindset of our government officials both at the national and local level is that force is the answer to almost every problem. The truth is that there is not a military solution to this face off in Ferguson,” said Michael T. McPhearson, Veterans For Peace Executive Director and Saint Louis resident.

He goes on to say, “After years of mistrust and abuse by some police officers, the only the solution to the unrest is transparency, the immediate arrest of Darren Wilson and a swift and fair investigation.”

National Veterans For Peace board member Tarak Kauff, in Saint Louis to stand in solidarity with the Ferguson community and the Brown family, commented, “Calling in the National Guard, even more military force, is not the answer. It was not the answer before when the militarized St. Louis County Police used it so why would more force now be the answer? Why is the police officer who killed Michael Brown not arrested? That in itself would ease tensions considerably. Force is not the answer. We need the justice process to be carried out and respectful dialogue, not military occupation.”

Veterans For Peace has joined with a coalition of groups demanding justice for Michael Brown Jr. The groups are calling for an immediate meeting with Governor Nixon at 3 pm today to pressure him to recall the National Guard and use community trust building strategies, not force, to end the confrontations.

Our nation’s consistent option for militarization and the use of deadly force when it is not needed – at home and abroad - is exactly why we find ourselves in this situation. It makes no sense to think more violence and trauma heaped upon the Ferguson community will quell the unrest. The Governor has moved beyond using a militarized police force to using the military. He is relying on intimidation and fear to end this. The only thing that will quiet this storm is justice.

Veterans For Peace Statement Opposing U.S. Bombing of Iraq and Syria

Date: 9/5/14

The U.S. is racing down a slippery slope towards war in Iraq and Syria. Since Aug. 8, the U.S. has conducted more than [124 airstrikes in Iraq](#). Approximately 1,000 U.S. troops are now on the ground in Iraq, with at least 350 more currently on their way.

President Obama initially said the bombing was part of a humanitarian mission to assist the Yazidi minority in northern Iraq being threatened by ISIS, the fundamentalist Islamic army that now controls wide swaths of Iraq and Syria. But Obama has now announced an open-ended bombing campaign, and he has ordered Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State John Kerry into the region to build military and political coalitions to sustain a long term war against ISIS.

According to the New York Times, President Obama has also authorized U.S. surveillance flights over Syria, reportedly in search of ISIS targets for later bombing missions. The Syrian government has offered to coordinate with U.S. military action against ISIS, the strongest rebel force fighting to overthrow the Assad government in Syria. But the U.S., which has aided ISIS' growth by facilitating the arming and training of rebels in Syria, has not asked permission for its flights into Syrian airspace.

Veterans For Peace members have witnessed the brutality and the futility of war, including the war in Iraq. We were sent to a war based on lies and we became part of the killing of a nation, along with as many as one million of its people. We watched as U.S. policy makers consciously stirred up ethnic and religious divisions, creating the conditions for civil war today.

Veterans know from first hand experience that you cannot bomb your way to peace.

More bombing will ultimately mean more division, bloodshed, recruitment for extremist organizations, and a continual cycle of violent intervention.

Last year the American people overwhelmingly sent a message to President Obama and the Congress: No U.S. Bombing in Syria. Last month, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed H. Con. Res. 105 stating that there is no legal authority for U.S. military involvement in Iraq without express Congressional approval. By unilaterally pursuing military action in Iraq and Syria, President Obama is acting in contempt of the American people, as well as of U.S. and international law.

We support the troops who refuse to fight and who blow the whistle on war crimes.

Under international law, military personnel have the right and the responsibility to refuse to be part of illegal wars and war crimes. U.S. troops are not the cops of the world. There is no legitimate mission for any U.S. service members in Iraq or Syria. We encourage GI's to find out their rights at the [GI Rights Hotline](#).

Veterans For Peace absolutely opposes U.S. military intervention in the Middle East, no matter what the rationalization. We call on all our members to speak out against any U.S. attacks on Iraq and Syria.

We wish to see a U.S. foreign policy based on true humanitarianism and real diplomacy based on mutual respect, guided by international law, and dedicated to human rights and equality for all.

[We call attention to the excellent constructive proposals](#) in a recent letter from 53 National Religious Groups, Academics, and Ministers Urging Alternatives to U.S. Military Action in Iraq.

We applaud the initiatives of several key peace groups and we encourage our members to participate.

[Sign Code Pink's letter](#) telling President Obama not to bomb Syria or Iraq.

[Sign Peace Action's petition](#) restricting U.S. arms sales around the world.

Related Articles written by VFP Members:

- David Swanson, [What to Do About ISIS](#)
-

Veterans Group in Response to President Obama's Plan to Confront ISIL Says They are Disappointed But Not Surprised

Date: 9/11/2014

Veterans For Peace has released a response (see below) to President Obama's strategy to confront ISIL calling on the president to use diplomacy and to follow his own advice that there is not a military solution to the problems in Iraq. **The organization of veterans, spanning from WWII to the current string of U.S. wars, warns that the president's plan continues to make the U.S. the "greatest purveyor of violence" on earth and places service members in harm's way when there are other solutions.** They call on the president to take [six non-military actions](#) to avoid the slippery slope of sending troops to Iraq as well as to stop sending weapons that fuel all sides of the conflict. The group calls for diplomacy to be the number one priority and to include Iran as a partner to help pressure the Iraqi government to be more inclusive of Sunni leaders. Veterans For Peace points out that there cannot be success in confronting ISIL in Iraq without Sunni help and that bombing these communities, who up to now are supporting ISIL because of bad relations with the central government in Baghdad, will not help mend fences.

Veterans For Peace President Patrick McCann commented, "***We are disappointed because President Obama's so called plan is more of the same.*** Nothing really different than waging war like the U.S. has done for thirteen years. Never mind that according to a State Department report, global terrorism has increased by 43% in 2014." He went on to say, "*Who really benefits from these failed policies? Clearly not the American people who pay for it in money and blood.*"

"We are not surprised by the president's military solution because for the past thirteen years our political leaders have not put forward any other kind of solution. It seems all they know is war and have no concept of how to work for peace," states Michael McPhearson, Interim Executive Director. "*Just as meeting violence with violence in our communities here at home does not solve economic and social problems, more violence in Syria and Iraq will not solve the conflicts or diminish the political challenges there.*"

Veterans For Peace response (see below) to the president's plan states, in part: President Obama outlined a strategy no different from what the U.S. has done for the past thirteen years. It is not a plan for success, it is a gamble that war will work this time when it has spectacularly failed thus far. We at **Veterans For Peace challenge the American people to ask whose interests does endless war serve? Who is paying for these wars, whose children are dying in these wars and who is getting paid to finance and provide weapons for these wars?** We the people are being driven by manipulated fear to support policies that are not in our interest. Peace is harder than war, but it is cheaper in blood and treasure. After thirteen years it is time to take another path, the path of peace.

Full Statement: Veterans For Peace Response to Obama's ISIL Plan: More War is Not a Plan or a Solution

Veterans For Peace is disappointed but not surprised by the so-called strategy

President Obama presented last night. We are disappointed because it is more of the same. The U.S. will continue to be “the greatest purveyor of violence” on the earth. It will continue to follow a failed policy of war-making in the Middle East. It will continue to waste precious financial resources which should be directed toward human needs and to support the U.S. economy. It will continue to put U.S. service members into harm’s way when other solutions are possible and it will continue to take the lives of innocent people, most of whom will undoubtedly be women and children who are always disproportionately impacted by war.

We are not surprised because it has been made clear to us that our leaders are not interested in finding solutions other than war to solve international conflicts. After thirteen years of war what has been accomplished? Iraq and Afghanistan are in shambles, the Taliban has not been defeated, al Qaeda has further decentralized to at least thirty countries, ISIL has emerged as a power of sorts in Iraq and Syria and a State Department report outlines that terrorism increased by 43% in 2013. By any objective measure, U.S. foreign policy in the Iraq and Afghanistan from Bush to Obama has been a failure. Yet more war is put forth as the answer, even though President Obama himself in the recent past said there is not a military solution to the violence in Iraq and last night explained that ISIL does not pose an immediate threat to the U.S. Why then do we continue down this path.

There are solutions to confronting ISIL which do not include U.S. military action.

1. Stop the airstrikes because the Sunni leaders and militia, who President Obama acknowledges must be persuaded to break with ISIL, see the U.S. as acting as the air force for the Kurds and Shia against Sunnis. The driving force for the Sunni-ISIL alliance is the alienation of Sunnis from Baghdad by the previous Iraqi administration. Bombing Sunnis will not help mend this relationship.
2. Stop the slippery slope of sending troops to Iraq and stop sending more weapons that fuel the conflict killing more civilians and ignoring human rights violations committed by “allies.” This includes pressuring countries to stop supporting and selling arms to ISIL and stopping all black market weapons sales.
3. Make diplomacy the number one priority. Since it is clear there is no military solution, seriously engage with everyone in the region, including Iran who is needed to force the Iraqi government to be more inclusive with Sunni leaders. Without an inclusive government in Iraq there is no way to effectively confront ISIL.
4. Initiate a new effort at building a broad diplomatic solution in the United Nations to use diplomatic and financial pressure to stop countries from financing and arming ISIL and other fighters in Syria. An arms embargo on all sides should be on the long-term agenda.
5. Make a real effort to restart UN negotiations to end the civil war in Syria. Set aside preconceived demands and work to end the violence. Once that is achieved the people of Syria can begin to chart their destiny.
6. Massively increase humanitarian efforts through the UN and any other means. Real and effective efforts to relieve suffering will go a long way in convincing people to break with ISIL. More U.S. bombings and killings will only confirm that the U.S. is the enemy of Islam.

President Obama outlined a strategy no different from what the U.S. has done for the past thirteen years. It is not a plan for success, it is a gamble that war will work this time when it has spectacularly failed thus far. We at Veterans For Peace challenge the American people to ask whose interests does endless war serve? Who is paying for these wars, whose children are dying in these wars and who is getting paid to finance and provide weapons for these wars? We the people are being driven by manipulated fear to support policies that are not in our interest. Peace is harder than war, but it is cheaper in blood and treasure. After thirteen years it is time to take another path, the path of peace.

Veterans For Peace Calls U.S. and Afghanistan Agreement More of the Same

Date: 9/30/14

Time to Change Course: All U.S. forces must be brought home immediately

U.S. and Afghan officials signed a Bilateral Security Agreement that allows the U.S. to keep 10,000 service members in Afghanistan past December 2014. A separate agreement was signed with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) who may contribute about 2,000 troops. The U.S. led force will focus on two missions: one charged with training Afghan security forces and the other to conduct counter-terrorism operations. Also, as part of the agreement, the Afghan government and Armed Forces will continue to receive billions of dollars in foreign aid it needs to survive.

Veterans For Peace calls for total withdrawal of U.S. troops and calls on the government of the United States to provide humanitarian aid directly to the people of Afghanistan, in non-coercive forms, to help the Afghan people rebuild their own lives and nation in cooperation with other nations in the region. The people of Afghanistan should be allowed to freely determine their own government without interference by the US.

“After thirteen years of warfare in Afghanistan, what have we accomplished?” asked Michael McPhearson, Executive Director of Veterans For Peace. *“Why will training Afghan forces and conducting counter-terrorism work now if it has not worked for more than a decade?”*

“U.S. policy has brought near or complete disintegration of civil society in several nations – Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Libya – which are now dominated by more vicious and angry violent militants than ever. Never-ending war and relying on the use of force has only caused more violence and death. After a decade of more guns, bombs and money to kill people, it’s time for a new direction.”

This Bilateral Security Agreement was signed one day after the new Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his chief rival, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah who is now chief executive officer in a new power-sharing position, took office. Both men had pledged to sign an agreement with the U.S. if they won election.

There is opposition to the agreement in Afghanistan because it bars Afghan courts from trying U.S. soldiers for alleged abuses. Former President Hamid Karzai stunned Afghans and international officials alike by refusing to sign the security deal with Washington last November, saying in part that U.S. forces had not done enough to curb civilian casualties and raids on civilians’ homes. Karzai also stated that the agreements would undermine chances for peace with the Taliban, who remain a formidable threat to the central government.

In previous statements **Veterans For Peace has pointed out that a State Department Report on terrorism released earlier this year states that since 2012, global terrorism has increased by 43%**. Most of those increases are due to incidents in Iraq, followed by Taliban activities in Afghanistan.

“Clearly this U.S. foreign policy that relies heavily on war, killing people and attempting to bomb them into submission is resulting in increased terrorist activity, not bringing stability,” concluded Michael McPhearson of Veterans For Peace.

Veterans For Peace: Peace at Home, Peace Abroad

Date: 10/31/14

WHAT IS IT AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR VETERANS FOR PEACE?

Since the August 9 shooting of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson, Veterans For Peace has worked closely with resistance organizing in Ferguson, MO. Our executive director, Michael McPhearson, was asked to be a co-chair of the local [Don't Shoot](#) organizing coalition responding to the situation, and he has done that. Since then, more than 20 VFP members have traveled to Ferguson to stand in solidarity with nonviolent protesters demanding justice and an end to longstanding and systemic oppression and police violence.

Veterans For Peace has a mission to end war and to heal the wounds of war. The National Board, along with many other members, recognizes that the violence of war has been epidemic in this country since its founding. We acknowledge the 500-year war on the indigenous peoples, the ongoing war and racism against black and brown communities beginning with slavery, the long and ongoing history of racist immigration policies, economic war against the poor of all colors and we see the connection between the violence and police militarization here in the United States and U.S. wars abroad.

Veterans For Peace struggles to end war in all its manifestations, both at home and abroad, in an all-encompassing demand for peace. We call this *Peace at Home, Peace Abroad*. This is not a new initiative, it is a new lens through which to see how we organize and talk about our work. We see the struggle for peace at home and our solidarity with communities here at home as a highly effective way to organize and build power to move our mission forward.

Peace at Home, Peace Abroad asks us to speak to people about the domestic issues that are nearly always at the top of people's concerns. *Peace at Home, Peace Abroad* attempts to help people see the connection between domestic and foreign policy, and how war and militarism negatively impacts both. This organizing strategy is directly connected with the larger mission of ending war.

Peace at Home, Peace Abroad also addresses veterans' issues. Suicides, homelessness, unemployment, mass incarceration, PTSD, and the inadequate VA healthcare system are directly linked aspects of war and militarism.

On all these issues Veterans For Peace has relevant things to say and work to do that will help layout a clear anti-war and pro-peace argument.

Our unique perspective is that we are people who have been directly affected by these issues. Addressing issues that directly touch people's lives here at home helps to build peace and also strengthen the movement. Many veterans will be inspired to join VFP because we make the connections that directly affect their lives here at home.

Racism is a driving force for modern war, so it must be talked about and confronted. Veterans' unique perspective is in how racism is used to brainwash us into fighting and killing. Racist

terms like “haji,” “towel head,” “gook” and “sand-nigger” are clear examples. Dehumanization is central to war fighting.

As for confronting racism, while VFP cannot lead the struggle against racism, confronting racism is the responsibility of any organization that claims to promote socio-economic justice or peace. We have that same responsibility to confront all forms of bias. This is why chapters and members righteously participate in Pride events, speak out against anti-immigrant laws and stand in solidarity with oppressed people on a host of other issues.

Do we take a lead on these issues? No. But we stand in solidarity.

Demilitarization of the police is a new initiative that the national office is developing with the support of the board. The national office began to look more closely at this problem in May. Drone Free St. Louis asked Michael McPhearson to be on a panel about military equipment being used in U.S. streets. As he learned more about [the 1033 program](#), whereby the Pentagon creates small armies out of local police forces, he was amazed to see the scope of police militarization and the communities most affected by this policing, such as Ferguson, MO. Demilitarization of the police directly confronts militarism and war.

Addressing climate change, VFP will not try to lead on climate change or on general environmental issues, but once again, we have much to say about the environment and the connection between militarism, war and climate change. The U.S. military is the largest single carbon emitter in the world. On that alone we have a responsibility to speak out, but as veterans we know it goes much farther. War generally poisons the environment through toxic munitions like depleted uranium and chemical warfare like Agent Orange and scars the environment through bombings or terrain degradation by heavy vehicles, in particular tanks, Bradleys, M88s and other tracked vehicles.

Michael McPhearson, VFP’s executive director, is one of the leaders in the Ferguson movement. Michael has said, “*Do you think I should have let all this happen around me and not be involved?*” That was really not possible for me. What would it say about VFP not to say anything about police in camouflage military uniforms confronting peaceful protesters and using force? What kind of legitimacy would VFP have to talk to struggling communities about war abroad when facing violence here at home? If we don’t believe in peacemaking here at home I’m not sure our rhetoric about peace is real.”

We cannot win the fight to abolish war without solidarity on a wider range of struggles. The issues are not separate and the mother of them all of them is violence, militarization and war. When domestic street violence is on VFP’s doorstep, shall we turn our backs and pretend it is not happening? What is needed in St. Louis and Ferguson are prayers and people, veterans committed to justice and to ending war, not just abroad but here at home.

Everything is connected. What we do at home affects how we are understood abroad. And how we are understood abroad affects our ability to influence world events including wars and the use of violence. It has not been unnoticed by the world community that our country often chastises others while mistreating and denying equality to our own citizens, especially the poor and people of color. In most of the world people of color and the poor fight the wars for the rich.

VFP's mission will not change. The costs of war are felt at home through poverty, racial inequality, collapsing inner cities and infrastructures, lack of universal health care and quality education and so forth. It is all connected. As we explain the connection and as we stand in solidarity with people struggling for justice right here at home in their communities, we will build VFP and the movement for peace and justice and the possibility of ending war will greatly increase.

Veterans For Peace: With a New Secretary of Defense, Let's Have a New Direction of Peace

Date: 12/5/14

Vietnam combat veteran Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel is being replaced by long time Pentagon insider Ashton Carter. President Obama announced him as his nominee to replace Hagel today.

It is our hope as veterans who have served in war and times of relative peace that the Obama Administration take this opportunity with its fourth Secretary of Defense to change the direction of U.S. foreign policy. By any measure, be it the Obama or Bush Administrations, U.S. foreign policy has been a failure. The past decade of endless war has not solved any global challenges. U.S. foreign policy has directly led to the rise of the brutal Islamic State in Iraq. There is more terrorism, more destabilized nations and more people around the world who have an unfavorable opinion of the U.S.

As the nation begins the year 2015 and the Obama Administration looks to evaluate itself and retool to govern, we call on the president to take bold action and step out in a direction of peace. We call on the president to withdraw from Afghanistan, we support the president's efforts at diplomacy with Iran and we remind the president that there are other means to address the Islamic State than the U.S. waging war.

1. Stop the airstrikes because the Sunni leaders and militia, who President Obama acknowledges must be persuaded to break with ISIL, see the U.S. as acting as the air force for the Kurds and Shia against Sunnis. The driving force for the Sunni-ISIL alliance is the alienation of Sunnis from Baghdad by the previous Iraqi administration. Bombing Sunnis will not help mend this relationship.
2. Stop the slippery slope of sending troops to Iraq and stop sending more weapons that fuel the conflict killing more civilians and ignoring human rights violations committed by "allies." This includes pressuring countries to stop supporting and selling arms to ISIL and stopping all black-market weapons sales.
3. Make diplomacy the number one priority. Since it is clear there is no military solution, seriously engage with everyone in the region, including Iran who is needed to force the Iraqi government to be more inclusive with Sunni leaders. Without an inclusive government in Iraq there is no way to effectively confront ISIL.
4. Initiate a new effort at building a broad diplomatic solution in the United Nations to use diplomatic and financial pressure to stop countries from financing and arming ISIL and other fighters in Syria. An arms embargo on all sides should be on the long-term agenda.
5. Make a real effort to restart UN negotiations to end the civil war in Syria. Set aside preconceived demands and work to end the violence. Once that is achieved the people of Syria can begin to chart their destiny. Iran should be included, not excluded, from Syria peace talks if they are to be successful.
6. Massively increase humanitarian efforts through the UN and any other means. Real and effective efforts to relieve suffering will go a long way in convincing people to break with ISIL. More U.S. bombings and killings will only confirm that the U.S. is the enemy of Islam.

The President and soon to be Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter have a new opportunity to lead the world in waging peace rather than in waging war. After a more than a decade of war that has clearly only led to more war, it is time to give peace a chance. If we are willing to sacrifice lives to the altar of war, can we not begin to risk ourselves for a vision of peace? When will we begin to teach our children that violence, killing and war are not the answers by not only instructing them not to be violent, but by also reflecting it in our lives and foreign policy?

Veterans For Peace Applauds Release of Detention and Interrogation Program Report

Date: 12/11/14

Veterans For Peace praises the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence release of their [Committee Study](#) of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program. VFP calls for a full investigation and accountability of officials at the highest levels for the authorizations and execution of torture techniques by the CIA and its international partners. The U.S. Senate report clearly outlines a pattern of systemic denial of human rights and trampling of U.S. values as outlined in the U.S. Constitution and the nation's shared belief in the sanctity and freedom of each man, woman and child. As veterans who took an oath to defend and uphold these values, we are heart broken that senior government officials would lead men and women who look to them for guidance and felt a deep patriotic duty to protect the U.S. down a sordid path of immoral behavior and depraved rationalizations.

We understand that the public outcry following the horrific events of September 11, 2001 put tremendous pressure on both the CIA and the Pentagon to find the perpetrators and protect the people of the U.S. However, the character of a people is best seen when under stress and in danger. It is easy to say what we believe; it is another thing altogether to act on those beliefs in the most difficult times. This report uncovers our modern day equivalent to the WWII Japanese internment camps. The September 11 tragedies, like the bombing of Pearl Harbor, sent the nation into panic and fear. As a result, the worst in the nation's character of bigotry and paranoia overwhelmed that which most makes us great, our belief in fairness, freedom and justice.

Critics of the report claim its release places people's lives in danger, but service members' lives were put in danger by those who designed and authorized policies of torture and indefinite detention. By ignoring accepted standards of prisoner treatment, the U.S. opened the door for rationalization by others to torture U.S. service members. Service members are further put in danger by the failed policies of unending war that have solved nothing, created new challenges and led to more war.

Critics also claim that critical information gained by torture were essential to bringing Osama bin Laden to justice and thus saved lives. The report refutes these claims. However, true or not, the pursuit of justice and security does not excuse the denial of human rights and abhorrent behavior that ignores the ideals the nation claims it holds most dear. The U.S. cannot call itself a champion of human rights and freedom while at the same time trampling those very ideals. The U.S. showed its commitment to our values by examining the horrible period in our history of ethnic Japanese internment, taking responsibility for this injustice and apologizing. We must continue in this tradition of acknowledging our crimes, working to ensure truth and justice prevails and committing to not allowing anything like this to happen again.

Senator Feinstein believes, "America is big enough to admit when it is wrong and confident enough to learn from its mistakes." Learning does not just happen. We as a nation must be proactive and challenge ourselves to learn. Veterans For Peace will not let the nation forget and we are here to challenge our nation's addiction to war and acceptance and rationalization of its accompanying evils.

Veterans Group Calls Restoration of Diplomatic Ties Between U.S. and Cuba Only a First Step

Date: 12/19/14

Veterans For Peace welcomes the recent policy changes between Cuba and the United States. In addition to a prisoner exchange, the new policy will also include easing commerce, communication, and travel restrictions. It also includes opening diplomatic relations which were severed in 1961.

As important as these changes are, they are only a first step. Additionally, Veterans For Peace calls for:

- **Both houses of the US Congress to lift the embargo**, because an embargo is an act of war. In this vein, VFP urges its members and others to contact their member of Congress to repeal the Helms-Burton act.
 - The **release of the approximately 70 Islamic prisoners at the Guantanamo prison** who have been cleared.
 - The **transfer of the remaining Guantanamo prisoners to US prisons** and to hold speedy trials.
 - The **complete pull out of all US military personnel from the Naval facility at Guantanamo Bay** which has been occupied since 1898. We call for Guantanamo Bay to revert to Cuban **sovereignty** as soon as possible.
 - Finally, **Veterans For Peace calls for the US to cease all overt and covert destabilization operations inside Cuba and to remain neutral as the transition of power occurs in 4 years when President Raul Castro's term ends**. This includes the exercise of "soft power" through NGOs and an end to programs seeking to undermine Cuba's government under the direction of the misnamed National Endowment for Democracy (NED), US Agency for International Development (USAID) and other similar organizations.
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Veterans For Peace Statement on the December 20th Killing of NYPD Police Officers

Date: 12/23/14

Veterans For Peace joins with millions of people across the United States who stand shocked and appalled at the murder of NYPD Officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu in Brooklyn. We join with the loved ones of these innocent police officers in mourning their deaths. Two more seats will be empty at tables this holiday season due to unnecessary violence.

The national movement sparked by the people of Ferguson, MO for racial justice and police accountability should and must continue. Blaming the killing of these officers on people exercising their constitutional rights to press for reform of an abusive system is misleading and irresponsible. It reminds us of those who say that we should not protest unjust U.S. wars or hold anyone accountable for torture because to do so aids and abets the enemy. Both narratives seek to maintain the existing state of affairs and ignore the countless peaceful protestors across the nation calling for peace and justice, and an end to all state-sanctioned violence.

The deaths of the Brooklyn police officers, ambushed by a socially alienated and disturbed Ismaaiyl Brinsley who had earlier wounded his ex-girlfriend (a health insurance specialist with the Veterans Administration and an Air Force reservist), to the police killings of Eric Garner, Michael Brown and many other unarmed people are part of a larger epidemic of violence we face in our nation. We must take pause and contemplate the best way forward to help solve this problem. This killing in particular demands that we examine the gaps in our mental healthcare system, the proliferation of guns that easily fall into the hands of known criminals and the mentally ill, and our national culture of violence and vengeance.

It is a familiar and sad pattern: 2014 Fort Hood, 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School, 2007 University of Virginia and many other murder-suicides, where confused and mentally vulnerable people searching for relief from personal and social conflicts turn to violence. Many more kill others but not themselves. And why not see violence as the answer? We are surrounded by examples of U.S. officials rationalizing and using violence to “solve” problems, including drone killings of innocent women and children and the assassination of innocent victims of mistaken identity. Unarmed men and women are killed, brutalized and tortured at home and abroad with no accountability signaling it as acceptable. Redemptive violence as an answer to solve most any problem has become an American way of life.

We would best serve ourselves, the memories of the Brooklyn police officers and all victims of violence by committing to nonviolent resolution of our disputes and respect for human life both at home and abroad. We must create a culture of peace, which includes how law enforcement polices communities. We must begin to uplift, celebrate and respect dialogue, cooperation, creative problem solving and nonviolence in all aspects of our life. Violence will always plague the human condition, but we can change that, provided the political and social will to confront it.
