

Truth in Recruiting

Tulsa Peace Fellowship's counter-recruitment update/digest for May 2009

lead story

Youth Need Your Help To Get Recruiters Out

quote:

"My school has an immense problem with military recruitment - **they are here every day, in the classrooms, in the lunchroom.**"

~Jenny E., student requesting the "We are Not Your Soldier" tour, with participants from Iraq Veterans Against War (IVAW)

related story:

San Francisco School Board makes good on its three-year Promise to Kick JROTC to the Curb

--program costs the school district a total of about \$1 million a year

--eleven instructors of the **Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, the soft-sell military recruiters inside schools**, were sent pink slips

quote:

"We need people to teach us right from wrong, not to shoot for our government. ...**What is the JROTC doing for my community? Nothing.**"

~teenage member from HOMEY (Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth), an anti-gang group in the Mission. Students from an anti-gang group spoke out at the S.F. school board meeting, against the JROTC program

related story:

Two Cities in Humboldt County Block the Military from Recruiting Anybody in Town under the Age of 18

--the law has the backing not just of a few City Councilors, but of thousands of voters who went to the polls

--the two cities used the **ballot box as a counter-recruitment tool**

quote:

"The Humboldt County laws appear to be the most direct counter-recruitment effort mounted by a city's electorate anywhere in the nation."

related story:

Rochester, N.Y., School District Defies NCLB: Will not share students' private information automatically

--**Rep. Mike Honda, D-Calif., introduces a bill in Congress giving back power of consent to the parents**

--Under the proposed bill, parents would have to consent before schools could release children's information to the military

quote:

"Parents have an obligation and right to control their children's private information,"

~Mike Honda, Democratic Representative from California

related story:

Tulsa County Democratic Party votes for the repeal of NCLB

--other counties in Oklahoma Congressional District 1 follow suit

contrast with the most militarized school system in the nation:

Nominee for U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has militarized Chicago Public Schools system (CPS)

--op/ed from Frank Belcastro

quote:

"The military's culture of uniformity and follow-orders, no-questioning discipline, important as it may be for an army, hardly aligns with academic values."

alternatives to bootcamp:

Peace Education Institute, in Oklahoma City, announces 2009 summer camps schedule

--residential camp that takes place at St. Francis of the Woods Retreat Center in Coil, OK.

--youths will receive 20 hours of non-violence training provided in the workshop entitled: "Creating a Culture of Peace."

page one:

featured op/ed

Media Can Now Cover Coffins Coming Home -- But What About the OTHER Missing War Photos?

by Greg Mitchell

file under: signature injury of Iraq occupation

Returning troops getting tested for brain injuries

--risks of **traumatic brain injury (TBI)** are greatest in occupation zones

--most are due to pressure waves from being near bomb blasts

quote:

"These are the most difficult, thorny wounds of war."

~Jason Forrester, director of policy at Veterans for America, an advocacy group

Iraq Vet in Pennsylvania Murders Was Radically Changed by War and PTSD

quote:

"Ten's usually commit suicide; nine's often kill somebody."

~Dr. Phillip Leveque, a combat veteran of WWII, explaining how PTSD cases rated on a scale of 1 to 10

Poverty Draft in Full Swing: The Nation's Economic Downturn Has Helped Army Recruiting

--U.S. Army last month stopped accepting **felons and recent drug abusers** into its ranks

--U.S. Army plans to cut 1,100 active-duty, Reserve and contract recruiters over the next two years

fact:

The Army annually granted hundreds of waivers for felons in recent years, reaching a high of 511 in 2007

file under: grassroots opposition worldwide to **neo-con hijacking of U.S. foreign policy**

Mothers Against War Lay Out 7-Point Program in Opposition to any 'Surge' in Afghanistan

quote:

"Recognize that ultimately, decisions about what happens in Afghanistan should be made in

Afghanistan, not Washington."

~MADRE, international women's human rights organization

sidebar:

Military allegedly pressured medical personnel to downgrade soldiers' PTSD diagnoses

file under: Military-Industrial-Congressional complex

Ten excellent reasons not to join the military:

c.. You May Be Injured

d.. You May Not Receive Proper Medical Care

e.. You May Suffer Long-term Health Problems

f.. You May Be Lied To

file under: psychotic sub-culture

U.S. Soldier Who Killed Herself--After Refusing to Take Part in Torture

--the chilling story of Alyssa Peterson

fact: She had been "reprimanded" for showing "empathy" for the prisoners being tortured.

page two:

file under: our monsters in Iraq

Iraq rape-slaying trial begins: former Army soldier charged

--crimes were dramatized in a feature-length film: "Redacted" (2007)

file under: the military no place for a woman

Book tells of female US soldiers raped by comrades

--follow up on prevalence of sexual assault in U.S. military, especially since **drop in entrance standards**

file under: The phenomenon of the **fake POW**

Numbers Claiming POW Benefits Exceed Number of POWs

--nothing new, just a reminder that nothing's sacred

quote:

"The P.O.W. Network says most phonies are just braggarts puffing at the local Kiwanis luncheon or preening for women in bars, but many have received significant benefits while trading off their borrowed valor."

file under: **fragging** case

US soldier says he saw Sgt. chase, shoot superior officer and fellow Sgt: 2 dead

--likely to go to court-martial

file under: what? you mean there are rules against murder on the battlefield?

US Army sergeant convicted of murdering four Iraqi detainees: faces **life imprisonment without parole**

--Master Sgt John Hatley acted as "judge, jury and executioner" of four men, captured in the Baghdad area in the spring of 2007

quote:

"A complete breakdown of discipline and crimes that are among the worst of a soldier"

~Captain Derrick Grace, prosecuting, in reference to damning evidence against Hatley, and

two other soldiers

follow-up

Attack on USS Cole left 17 Sailors Dead: Compensation Payments to be made from Terrorism Risk Insurance Act

backpage

file under: environmental disasters caused by the U.S. Army

U.S. Military Dumped 2,500 tons of Chemical Munitions Off Coast of Hawaii

--more than 16,000 bombs containing lethal mustard, cyanide, lewisite, cyanogens and chloride were dumped into the sea

file under: Reasons not to join up #2 "You may get hurt"

U.S. Army Likens Soldiers to Pigs, Rats, in Cannon-Fodder Experiments

--**pigs dressed in body armor** and strapped into Humvees were blown up, for research purposes say mad military scientists

--George Orwell reminds us that some are more equal than others

file under: psychotic sub-culture

file under: After the party, the hangover

US to spend \$6 billion on Cold War weapons cleanup

follow-up: DoD spends \$4 billion a year on public relations

Pentagon Closes Office Accused of Issuing Propaganda Under Bush

--Orwell would be pleased

epigraph for this issue of "Truth in Recruiting":

"Maybe we weren't in Iraq on a humanitarian mission"

~Iraq veteran, Benjamin Lewis, ex-Marine, speaking out against the continued Iraq occupation by the U.S. Armed Services

related group:

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

"Advancing human rights is the work of many joining hands"

http://www.uusc.org/learn_by_doing

Tulsa Peace Fellowship's counter-recruitment update/digest for May 2009

lead story

Youth Need Your Help To Get Recruiters Out of Their Schools

In the wake of protests of 6 years of the Iraq occupation, we are receiving requests from students and teachers to bring the We Are Not Your Soldiers Tour to their schools. We can't get to them without your help! Donate today to bring Iraq & Afghanistan veterans into high schools across the country.

Thousands of students need to be reached in the next two months, encouraged to not join the army and

to forge a student movement to get recruiters out of the schools as part of halting all the wars.

This tour is needed to reach these youth now.

Barack Obama announced in March that he is sending 4,000 troops to Afghanistan in addition to the 17,000 troops he announced in February. This is not change! This is an escalation of a crime against humanity. What are these troops being sent to do? What are the youth being recruited for? The murder, rape, and torture of innocent men, women, and children; to kick down doors and terrorize families... all so that the U.S. can tighten its stranglehold on the land, resources, and shipping routes of Middle East.

Where will these troops that Obama is sending come from? The military recruiters have budget of billions to recruit youth who are in high school now. They roam the hallways and lunch-rooms, call students at home, and set up at malls where kids hang out. The military cannot fight this expanded "war on terror" in Afghanistan without this fresh cannon fodder. Military recruiters now have almost unlimited access to reach high school students because the "No Child Left Behind" law ties funding for schools to whether recruiters can get to students.

Most of the schools have been predominantly Black and Latino and almost all of them have been working class - exactly the students that the recruiters are targeting. When recruiters come into their school, students need to know exactly what they are being recruited for. Not freedom, not democracy, and not better "career options."

Speakers on the tour give students reasons not to go into the military, and help organize collective resistance to recruiters' lies by spreading visible mass resistance to joining this military as a part of stopping this war of terror for empire.

Classroom presentations include a short presentation by a World Can't Wait youth organizer and an Iraq and/or Afghanistan war veteran, a 10-minute video clip of testimony by Iraq veterans from the March 2008 Winter Soldier hearings about what they witnessed and perpetrated and footage of high school students protesting military recruiters along with an open discussion. At the end we conduct a short survey to give us a sense of what young people are thinking.

This takes funding. As a movement of the people we rely entirely on your support. Speakers are ready, students want us to come, and we are ready to organize another even stronger round especially with the latest intolerable surge in Afghanistan.

[Donate generously](#) so that World Can't Wait can continue this tour reaching thousands more students before the end of this school year with the truth of what they are being recruited for

To learn more about the tour, watch videos, and meet the vets visit <http://wearenotyoursoldiers.org>

Sincerely, [Debra Sweet](#), Director, The World Can't Wait

P.S. This tour and the Iraq Vets that are a part of it are extremely precious in a time where so many have given up the fight to stop these wars. Support them - spread the resistance - donate generously today

World Can't Wait - info@worldcantwait.org

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Send checks or money orders, payable to "World Can't Wait":

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New York, NY 10013

For sponsorship level donations, or if you wish to make stock donations please contact our development director Samantha Goldman samantha@worldcantwait.org, 347-581-2677.

To make a tax-deductible donation of \$100 or more in support of WCW's educational activities, please make checks out to "The Alliance for Global Justice," a 501(3)(c) organization, and designate "for WCW" in the check memo line.

From a New York City teacher after the tour:

At the time the "We Are Not Your Soldiers" tour visited, my students were preparing to take the New York State Regents exam. Many of my students have failed the exam at least two times. As their last shot before making the decision to drop out or get a GED, I was concerned that failing the regents exam would encourage some of my students to join the military instead.

Matthis Chiroux, a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and Elaine Brower, member of the World Can't Wait, hosts of the "We Are Not Your Soldiers" tour, presented a compelling excerpt of the "Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan Eyewitness Accounts" testimonials which summoned the visual and emotional interest of otherwise unresponsive youth. Matthis engaged the students with his own personal recollection of the military. He asked important questions, revealing truths of the racism of the war on Iraq, and connected to the personal lives of the students, while Elaine Brower offered the perspective of a mother, a point of view many of my students are sensitive to having been raised by only their mothers.

After the World Can't Wait presentation, it was apparent that my students were affected. The next day one student showed me a poem he wrote about a young boy from the ghetto enlisting in the military and dying, another asked for a World Can't Wait T-shirt, and yet another, who had wanted to join the military, handed me a recommendation form for a vocational school. Others are still lost forever to the military but the "We Are Not Your Soldiers" tour offered the education American youth really need and that more teachers need to be more conscious of.

Request for the tour from a student:

My school has an immense problem with military recruitment - they are here every day, in the classrooms, in the lunchroom. At least 1/4 of our graduates join the military, as this is a fairly rural community and people don't believe they have many options.

I want to request details of the tour, and how to arrange a visit, what it would cost, etc. The school has agreed to permit it (grudgingly), but it would not be an easy audience.

Any information you could send would be extremely helpful. Thank you. Jenny E.

related story:

JROTC under fire in S.F. schools

By Lauren Smiley

Published on April 07, 2009

Students from an anti-gang group wait to speak against the JROTC program, at school board meeting.
Photo credit: Gabriela Hasbun

Eleven instructors of the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps shuffled into the school board meeting in late March like men on death row who might be handed an 11th-hour pardon. Hopeful skeptics. Just two weeks before, the San Francisco Unified School District had sent them pink slips — proof that the school board was making good on its three-year threat to kick them to the curb.

The message, passed by a 4-3 school board vote in 2006, was this: Hell, no, you can't have a program run by retired sergeants and colonels in the peacenik capital of the Left Coast. Sorry, our kids will not goose-step around the courtyard in uniforms. As things stand now, the instructors must dismantle their programs at seven high schools in June. It's the first time anywhere in the country that JROTC has been kicked out of a school district solely on ideological grounds, according to Paul Kotakis, the program's national spokesman.

It has been a quintessential only-in-San Francisco battle — the military ambassadors playing the rogues, and the lefty progressives as the establishment — and one that will not die. At that March board meeting, two commissioners (both of whom have taken pains to reassert their liberal antiwar credentials despite supporting the program) introduced a resolution to bring JROTC coughing back up on shore. That day's *Examiner* had indicated that the new post-election lineup on the school board might provide the four votes needed to do just that.

Graying antiwar activists filed in, wearing the regalia of the left: a "Give Bush the Boot" T-shirt, "Military Out of Our Schools Now" pins, a camouflage combat jacket of a Marine who said he was out of jail for refusing to go to Iraq.

It would be a long wait. The meeting started 45 minutes late because of the tardy arrival of board president Kim-Shree Maufas, the mother of a former JROTC cadet and a skeptic of the program. With the JROTC measure scheduled for a first reading — no vote — far down in the agenda, Maufas denied a commissioner's request to move the public comment earlier in the meeting to let the kids get home, as has been done at nearly every meeting they've attended. (Ma had also requested earlier that day that the item be taken out of order, a courtesy for high-ranking officials.)

With the JROTC instructors in the lobby on edge and grumbling about "disrespect" and "delay tactics," even school district spokeswoman Gentle Blythe interpreted Maufas' move as a political statement: "I don't think this is so much a message to the kids, but to the other commissioners about whether this

should have been brought up again."

Maufas finally called public comment at 9:55 p.m., three hours into the meeting.

Teenagers from HOMEY (Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth), an antigang group in the Mission, offered a rebuttal: "We need people to teach us right from wrong, not to shoot for our government. ...What is the JROTC doing for my community? Not nothing," one said to loud applause from the activists in the room

The anti-JROTC contingent is convinced the program is a rotten tool of recruitment into a military that, if not creating cannon fodder for America's wars of imperialism, pumps out "yes sir" automatons who don't question the military like they do.

In the mid-'90s, the school board banned the air rifles used in target practice and the decoy ones used in drill competition, leaving the cadets to twirl the politically safer poles instead. You could say San Francisco's program has been neutered: JROTC lite. The program changed "uniform day" from the once-a-week requirement to just once a month after school. Galileo moved drum practice inside the school to appease neighbors, who'd complained for years. Mission halted uniform day altogether this year. The physical conditioning team at Lowell abandoned the camouflage uniforms that had long elicited the middle finger and catcalls from passing cars. ("We know they're the real idiots," one student said about the taunts.)

The JROTC program has been in the crosshairs since at least the '80s, but opponents didn't have the votes to phase out the program until 2006, when school board president Dan Kelly, a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, and Commissioner Mark Sanchez wrote the resolution that the program was an "inappropriate extension of the nation's military into the civilian sphere."

Then there's the depletion of the ranks. Participation was hit hard by the board's decision last summer to revoke the classes' physical education (PE) credit, down from 1,600 students three years ago to around 600 now. The decision forced the district to hire nine new PE teachers to handle the increased class load. At the same time, the district continues to split the average \$84,500 salary of the 12 JROTC staffers with Cadet Command, the Virginia-based body that oversees the 1,645 Army JROTC programs in the country and all but one in San Francisco. The instructors additionally receive a retirement pension from the Army; all in all, they earn the same as if they were still on active duty at their age and rank. The program costs the district a total of about \$1 million a year.

Chief in the opponents' case against JROTC is that the program is a recruiting tactic, a practice the school board banned on district campuses in 1991, until the federal No Child Left Behind Act a decade later mandated that the military must be granted the same access to students as other postgraduate options. The opposition points to congressional testimony that a high percentage of JROTC graduates eventually join the armed services nationwide: 40 percent, according to a House Armed Services Committee report in 1999.

JROTC creates a "brand loyalty" to the military among kids who otherwise wouldn't have thought of the armed services as an option. Even if they don't enlist right after graduation, once they hit a tough job market or find college classes harder than expected, they'll think back on the good times and constant promotions in JROTC, says Pablo Paredes of the American Friends Service Committee, who does counter-recruiting in schools.

Critics think creating role models with military trappings is dangerous. "I think it's entirely inappropriate to have someone in the military in front of such impressionable 14-year-olds," says ex-Commissioner Mark Sanchez, an eighth-grade teacher.

If JROTC loses, what will take its place? The district is developing other leadership programs, such as four-year training for students to become first responders to earthquakes or natural disasters in conjunction with the city's Department of Emergency Management.

While still largely in denial, the "instructors" have faced the reality of having to find new jobs.

<http://sfweekly.com/2009-04-08/news/jrotc-under-fire-in-s-f-schools/>

Humboldt County cities restrict military

Matthew B. Stannard, *San Francisco Chronicle* Staff Writer

Sunday, April 26, 2009

Arcata, Humboldt County -- This picturesque community among the redwoods, once dubbed "the Berkeley of the north" for its reputation for unabashed liberalism, has repeatedly thumbed its nose at the federal government.

Over the years, its civic leaders have declared this city a sanctuary for military resisters to the Persian Gulf War and barred local enforcement of the Patriot Act. If they had had enough pull, President George W. Bush would have been impeached at least once.

Now Arcata is at it again, with a law blocking the military from recruiting anybody in town under the age of 18. And this time, the law has the backing not of a few City Council activists, but of thousands of voters who went to the polls in November.

On the same day, voters in Eureka, a historically politically staid city a dozen miles away, surprised everybody by approving an identical measure. In Eureka, "Support the Troops" ribbons far outnumber the "U.S. Out of Humboldt" bumper stickers more common in Arcata.

The **anti-recruiting measures** appealed to Humboldt County's spirit of self-reliance and self-determination, which harks back to the Gold Rush. Tucked behind a wall of towering redwoods and lacking a railroad link to the Bay Area until 1914, its population was largely cut off from the rest of California. Today, Highway 101 provides relatively quick access to the urban centers to the south, but the sense of a Redwood Curtain dividing the county from the rest of the state has never completely faded.

"The fact that Eureka followed suit tells me it's more about independent thinking," said Laura Middlemiss, who was born and raised in Arcata, raised three kids there and felt that recruiters calling her kids at home went too far.

"The reason this measure passed in this region is that people don't want to be told what to do."

A court hearing is scheduled in Oakland on June 9 on the government's demand that the cities' laws be overturned for seeking powers constitutionally granted to the federal government. The cities are claiming that the United States is party to international treaties prohibiting the recruitment of children under 17 - which they argue include activities such as talking about the benefits of military service. Currently [according to municipal law] contact with recruiters may begin at any age. The treaties, the

cities argue, hold equal standing to the supremacy clause [of the U.S. Constitution], an argument that Allen Weiner, a Stanford Law School lecturer, who is not connected to the suit, called novel.

"If they were to have a chance, that would be the one place they have a chance," he said. Enforcement of the laws is on hold for now, pending the court hearing. Recruiters are still operating in their small offices.

Characteristically anti-war cities, including San Francisco and Berkeley, have tried to battle military recruitment. But nobody can recall a case where a city used the ballot box as a counter-recruitment tool, an act that has broader significance.

"It touches on a couple of core issues that really relate to the foundation of government," said Allen Weiner, a senior lecturer at Stanford Law School. "The questions of what areas belong to the federal government, and what areas belong to the state."

The anti-recruiting law was the inspiration of former Arcata City Councilman Dave Meserve, who gained national attention after his 2002 election by spearheading a first-in-the-nation law making compliance with the USA Patriot Act illegal. In late 2007, Meserve began thinking about ways to re-engage his town against the war. He hit on military recruiting, which he saw as a link between war overseas and everyday life at home, and he decided that instead of going to the same activists or to the council, he'd go to the ballot.

"You don't get anywhere by getting the same 30 people out to the demonstration. You don't get anywhere talking in all the clichés against war, against imperialism," he said.

The measure, which Meserve wrote to focus on the naiveté of youth, easily qualified for the November ballot in Arcata, and then qualified in Eureka, after a last-minute petition drive by Winfield "Win" Sample, a World War II veteran turned Orwell-quoting pacifist, who brought Arcata's measure to Eureka.

"Somebody had to start it," shrugged Sample, an outspoken man who hands out business cards bearing an Edward Abbey quote - "A patriot must be ready to defend his country against his government."

When the polls closed on Nov. 4, the measure had won easily in both towns.

"I was of course happy with 73 percent in Arcata," Meserve said. "But 57 percent in Eureka just blew me away."

San Francisco's school board has battled against JROTC, and Berkeley's City Council issued a letter - since rescinded - calling local Marine recruiters "unwelcome intruders." But the Humboldt County laws appear to be the most direct counter-recruitment effort mounted by a city's electorate anywhere in the nation.

The Department of Defense refused to allow interviews with Humboldt County recruiters, citing the lawsuit.

According to data by the National Priorities Project, Humboldt County youths enlist in the Army at a rate of about 1.5 per 1,000 15- to 24- year-olds - a rate a tad higher than California as a whole, and about on par with the national average.

Activists take notice

Win or lose, for Meserve, the election demonstrated that activists can be more effective by reaching out to mainstream voters instead of putting all their resources into rallies or symbolic resolutions - a message that is spreading among activists from Berkeley to back east.

"Activists around the country are certainly looking at this and saying, 'Hmmm, maybe we can do something like that here,' " said Sam Diener, editor of *Peacework Magazine* in Cambridge, Mass.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/04/26/MNE6176LK9.DTL>

further detail:

The Arcata Youth Protection Act

This text is an abridged version of the Arcata law passed in November 2008. Eureka passed an identical measure.

No person who is employed by or an agent of the United States government shall, within the City of Arcata, in the execution of his or her job duties, recruit, initiate contact with for the purpose of recruiting, or promote the future enlistment of any person under the age of eighteen into any branch of the United States Armed Forces.

Nothing in this Ordinance shall prevent any person from voluntarily visiting a military recruitment office or specifically initiating a request to meet with a recruiter.

Nothing in this Ordinance shall prevent individuals who are not employed by or agents of the U.S. government from encouraging people under the age of eighteen to join the military.

Any military recruiter who violates this Ordinance, as well as his or her commanding officer, shall be held responsible for said violation. Both shall be deemed guilty of an infraction and shall be subject to the penalties stated in the Arcata Municipal Code.

Source: www.smartvoter.org

Congress to debate role of recruiters in schools

Redo of federal education law sparks debate over military recruiters' access to students

Kevin Freking, AP News
Apr 24, 2009

Mary Adams doesn't want her daughter hearing pitches from military recruiters as she completes her high school education.

"They promise them all kinds of benefits without telling them of the risks," said Adams, a registered nurse whose daughter is a sophomore at a high school in Rochester, N.Y.

When approving the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, lawmakers inserted language requiring high schools that receive federal money to meet certain requirements regarding military recruiting.

Congress will consider reauthorizing the education law later this year. Rep. Mike Honda, D-Calif.,

wants Congress to change how schools handle student contact information so military recruiters do not have automatic access to it. He said parents in his district are frustrated that recruiters are contacting their children at home.

Under Honda's bill, parents would have to consent to releasing their children's information to the military. Currently, parents have to ask that the information be withheld, and Honda said many parents are unaware they have that option.

"Parents have an obligation and right to control their children's private information," said Honda, who taught high school biology and was a principal before entering politics.

The National Education Association and the National PTA have supported Honda's legislation in previous years. Honda said he feels the bill has good prospects this year because of Democratic gains in the House and Senate and the change to a Democratic administration.

Of the Army's 80,000 enlistments for active duty during the 2008 fiscal year, about 14,000 — or nearly 18 percent — were high school students.

In Rochester, in 2005, the Board of Education approved a policy that said contact information would not be shared unless parents approved. But only a small percentage of parents sent in approval letters.

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/04/24/congress-to-debate-role-of-recruiters-in-schools/>

>From the facebook pages of Rep. Honda (CA-15) – a former teacher, principal and school board member:

My legislation to address disparities in our schools:

The Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission Act

Thursday, March 26, 2009 at 2:06pm

Today I re-introduced legislation in Congress to overhaul the country's education system and finally address the disparities in America's schools. My Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission Act attends to the President's concern regarding, in Obama's words, the "relative decline of American education," which is "untenable for our economy, unsustainable for our democracy, and unacceptable for our children."

Despite our best efforts, our children are not receiving an equitable education. There are vast disparities between the education provided by schools in different school districts, counties and states. Our current funding formulas are outdated, relying on factors such as average daily attendance, average costs for "regular" students, percentage of low-income students and concentrations of low-income students, special education students and English language learners. Funding formulas are based on a number of factors not necessarily correlated to the individual needs of the children in the school, and they vary from state to state.

The Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission Act creates a national commission charged with gathering public opinions and insights about how government can improve education and eliminate disparities in the education system. Importantly, the Commission's composition would change the nature of the debate. Comprised of parents, teachers and experts on equity, civil rights, education policy, school finance, economics, and taxation — not merely state and federal legislators — the

reform road map would be written by all users and beneficiaries of America's education system.

This is a national problem demanding a national conversation. If fostered effectively, I believe that this dialogue can have a direct and positive impact on our nation's economy and capacity to lead in the 21st century.

The bill has not yet been posted on Thomas, but you can view the [bill text](#) on my website and read what leading [education organizations](#) have said about the bill.

http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=26404007&ref=profile#/note.php?note_id=60339229786&ref=mf

sidebar:

Tulsa County Democratic Party votes for the repeal of NCLB

Democrats in other counties in Oklahoma Congressional District 1 follow suit

At their County Convention, held on 4th April 2009, the Tulsa County Democratic Party (TCDP) voted to repeal the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Similarly, Democrats in Washington County (Oklahoma), also voted to repeal the legislation, which has been accused of being too favorable to militarism in this country. The resolutions passed at the county level will be considered again at the upcoming convention of the Oklahoma Congressional District 1 Democrats and after that, once again at the State Convention of the Oklahoma Democratic Party (ODP).

Although the legislation as it stands includes onerous obligations placed on school districts to fork over information about unsuspecting students to the federal government, so that the Department of Defense can send out military predators to recruit them for the military, the TCDP's objections to the legislation are more about "unfunded mandates" in education and "federal mandates" in state-run education, than about curtailing the presence of military recruiters on school grounds, or restricting military predators' access to private information about students. Unlike other school districts in the country where students and/or their parents have to "opt in" to being recruited by the military, in the Tulsa Public Schools system students and/or their parents have to "opt out" of such recruitment. Few parents are aware of their right to exclude their child's private information from the roster of kids whom the military considers fair game for recruiting.

Recruiters target the young, the impressionable, and the uncritical, in their monthly attempt to make quota, as expected of them by the Department of Defense (DoD). A student can enlist as early as 17 if his or her parent will grant consent. But recruiters target even younger students. Meanwhile, there are ethical reasons for not militarizing schools, and legal reasons for not transforming children into "child soldiers."

Duncan's military vs. school values

Date: 4/12/09 10:41:06 PM Central Daylight Time

Letter to the Editor, April 12, 2009

President-elect Barack Obama named as his nominee for U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, the chief executive officer of the Chicago Public Schools system (CPS). Today, the flagship projects in CPS are its five military academies, affiliated with either the Army, Navy, or Marines. Cadets can practice marching on an academy's drill team and learn the proper way to fire a weapon on the rifle team.

Officials like Duncan and Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley justify the need for the military academies by claiming they do a superlative job teaching students discipline and providing them with character-building opportunities. Without a doubt, teaching students about discipline and leadership is an important aspect of being an educator. But is the full-scale uniformed culture of the military actually necessary to impart these values?

A student who learns to play the cello, who studies how to read music, will learn discipline too, without a military-themed learning environment. In addition, encouraging students to be critical thinkers, to question accepted beliefs and norms, remains key to a teacher's role at any grade level. The military's culture of uniformity and follow-orders, no-questioning discipline, important as it may be for an army, hardly aligns with these academic values.

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Peace Education Institute announces 2009 summer camps schedule

by: peacearena
Thu Mar 05, 2009

The summer peace camps program offered by The Peace Education Institute is now in its third year of providing young people an opportunity to explore ideas and issues, to expand their knowledge of history, and to develop cooperative, community-building skills that will serve them throughout life.

*** Peace Challenge Camp (for rising 5th & 6th graders) will be July 27-31.**

This is a residential camp that takes place at St. Francis of the Woods Retreat Center in Coil, OK. It has a maximum enrollment of 16 students. The 5 day camp starts with a visit to the Oklahoma City Memorial Museum and then a trip to St. Francis of the Woods. The kids live in cabins of 4 campers, a teen helper and adult counselor. Throughout the weeks, they live and work together in this small team, including cooking and cleaning their home space. The curriculum focuses on non-violence as the preferred method for problem-solving. There is a lot of art and some team challenges that are scattered around the campus. Guest speakers include people who have experienced violence and have overcome the need for retribution and bitterness.

The cost of this camp is \$200.00. Scholarship assistance is available.

*** Peace Makers in Action (for rising 9-12 graders)**

The High School Peace Camp is located at 3131 N. Penn Ave., Oklahoma City, OK. Monday-Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Vegetarian lunches are provided.

This summer, the youths will receive the full 20 hours of nonviolence training provided in the workshop entitled: "Creating a Culture of Peace: Nonviolence for Personal and Social Change."

There is plenty of time for creativity in this camp. Bands form, photography groups emerge, etc.

The cost of this camp is \$100. Scholarship assistance is available.

For details about the camps or to register, visit www.PeaceEducationInstitute.org, or call 405-204-6479.

Tulsa Peace Fellowship's counter-recruitment update/digest for May 2009
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featured op/ed

Media Can Now Cover Coffins Coming Home -- But What About the OTHER Missing War Photos?

For whatever reason, the media in the U.S. have rarely shown the full face of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, despite the brave and remarkable efforts, and wishes, of countless press photographers and cameramen.

By Greg Mitchell

(April 06, 2009) -- In no way do I downplay the new Pentagon order (pushed by President Obama) that allows the media to cover the remains of fallen service members coming home to the U.S., often at Dover, Del. In fact, I have pushed for this in my writing here for more than six years now. Families must approve and, amazingly, that indeed happened with the return of Sgt. Phillip Myers last night.

But we should not lose sight that the even bigger issue involves the other photos that have rarely or never appeared in the U.S. media -- graphic images of the real toll of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I've written about that from the start as well, even talked about it with Bill Moyers on TV while the invasion was still in progress in late March, 2003. The issue then was the uproar over a picture in USA Today that showed injured Iraqi soldiers. Readers demanded to know why the paper didn't run a more "positive" image. The same week the Dallas Morning News was hit by readers for showing dead Iraqi civilians. They charged this was an "antiwar" photo.

For whatever reason, the media in the U.S., in the weeks and then years after that rarely showed the full face of war, despite the brave and remarkable efforts, and wishes, of countless press photographers and cameramen. Bloody scenes, featuring Americans, almost never made the U.S. media, while being widely shown abroad, and on the Web. When they did appear, protests from the government or readers

seemed to set the media off this path. Dead Iraqis got more play, but not nearly to the extent called for.

We did a lengthy feature at Editor & Publisher about this four years ago (it was a finalist for a top award) and little changed afterward. The Los Angeles Times did a survey of six top newspapers and two leading news magazines during a six-month period and found only a smattering of graphic images. James Rainey, the Times reporter, revealed: "Many photographers and editors believe they are delivering Americans an incomplete portrait of the violence."

Photogs often complained that their editors back home refused to run the shots, saying that they had to get an OK from the military or a family whenever an injured or dead soldier appeared. By the time they got approval, if they got it, the "news" value had passed.

No longer "timely." Which is odd, considering the wars still go on.

So, yes, showing the coffins coming home is important -- but showing how the brave service members ended up in that state was always more important.

Greg Mitchell (gmitchell@editorandopublisher.com) is editor of E&P. His latest book is "Why Obama Won." His book last year on Iraq and the media was "So Wrong for So Long."
http://www.editorandopublisher.com/eandp/columns/pressingissues_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003959366

Returning troops getting tested for brain injuries

Brain-tested before shipping out, returning troops get checked again as military tackles TBI

Kristin M. Hall, AP News
Apr 09, 2009

Every soldier who's gone to war in the past year paused before leaving to take a brain test — basic math, matching numbers and symbols and identifying patterns to measure response time and accuracy. Now that some of these troops have returned, they're taking a fresh round of tests, all part of a broad effort by the military to better treat head injuries. Those who suffer a concussion or similar head injury will get a follow-up test.

The 101st Airborne Division is the only division going a step further and testing all soldiers again over the last few months as they have been returning to Fort Campbell from tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The tests alone can't diagnose traumatic brain injuries, the signature injury of the wars, potentially crippling and sometimes hard to detect damage from blows that can include an exploding roadside bomb, a mortar blast or a vehicle crash.

But they help doctors zero in on which mental functions are damaged and the best way to treat that by comparing an individual soldier's brain function before and after the injury.

Military doctors estimate that 10 percent to 20 percent of soldiers sent to Iraq or Afghanistan suffer a TBI. Symptoms can range from minor headaches or dizziness to memory loss or vision problems. And it can take some soldiers a while to realize how severely they've been affected.

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/04/09/returning-troops-getting-tested-for-brain-injuries-2/>

further coverage:

**Veterans for America says TBI is under-diagnosed:
War Concussions and Permanent Brain Damage Prevalent**

--Army Brass sits in their offices unable to understand reality on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan

Some veterans groups applaud efforts to better diagnose traumatic brain injuries, but say it's more likely that the military has been undertreating the problem.

"It stretches credulity to believe that all the people who have suffered traumatic brain injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan are getting the treatment they need. That's a laughable notion," said Jason Forrester, director of policy at Veterans for America, an advocacy group.

The military defines a concussion — or mild traumatic brain injury — as a blow or jolt to the head that caused loss of consciousness, altered consciousness or amnesia. Most are due to pressure waves from being near bomb blasts.

More than 300,000 U.S. veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have suffered head injuries, many of them concussions that have gone untreated, according to a Rand Corp. study released last year.

VA officials issued a statement this week saying they are proud of their efforts to treat traumatic brain injuries. Forrester, the veterans advocate, said estimates of concussions are probably low because some service members fear that being diagnosed with a neurological or psychological problem would hamper a military career.

Better assessment is needed for a complicated problems, he added. "These are the most difficult, thorny wounds of war," he said.

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/04/15/army-officials-say-war-concussions-overdiagnosed-2/>

Military allegedly pressured medical personnel to downgrade soldiers' PTSD diagnoses

John Byrne

Published: Wednesday April 8, 2009

US military officers pressured Army medical personnel not to diagnose soldiers with post traumatic stress disorder in an apparent effort to save money and reduce benefits, according to an investigation published Wednesday.

http://rawstory.com/news/2008/Military_allegedly_pressured_medical_personnel_to_0408.html

Reasons not to join the military:

- c.. You May Be Injured
- d.. You May Not Receive Proper Medical Care
- e.. You May Suffer Long-term Health Problems
- f.. You May Be Lied To

more coverage:

"I am under a lot of pressure to not diagnose PTSD"

A secret recording reveals the Army may be pushing its medical staff not to diagnose post-traumatic stress disorder. The Army and Senate have ignored the implications.

http://www.salon.com/news/special/coming_home/2009/04/08/tape/

Iraq Vet in Pennsylvania Murders Was Radically Changed by War and PTSD

Tim King Salem-News.com

PTSD sufferers can't always leave the war behind -- deadly, senseless shootings in Altoona, Pennsylvania April 6th

Sergeant Nicholas Horner is a highly decorated war veteran who was sent to Iraq repeatedly. On his third tour things went south and he was sent home.

But according to what we can tell, this soldier, in spite of having his weapon taken away and being sent home early from Iraq, on his *third* tour, was never officially designated as *having* PTSD.

Family and friends say this father of two came back from the third tour as a changed man. He had to fight to receive treatment from the VA and nobody should have to do that. In the most basic sense, being *damaged goods* from the war is not what anyone wishes. They are placed in extremely dangerous positions for long periods of time and they do it for a year each time they deploy.

Our medical writer, Dr. Phillip Leveque, is a combat veteran of WWII and he says nobody can imagine what a soldier goes through when all hell breaks loose in war. I have been to both war theaters and I have seen the soldiers and Marines who have suffered so much.

He explains that PTSD cases, like other medical and psychiatric disorders, are rated on a scale of 1 to 10. The lower the number, the more manageable, the higher the number the more severe.

"Ten's usually commit suicide; nine's often kill somebody," Leveque said.

http://www.salem-news.com/articles/april182009/nick_horner_tk_4-17-09.php

U.S. Soldier Who Killed Herself--After Refusing to Take Part in Torture

With each new revelation on U.S. torture in Iraq, Afghanistan and Gitmo, I am reminded of the chilling story of Alyssa Peterson.

By Greg Mitchell

(April 23, 2009) -- With each new revelation on U.S. torture in Iraq, Afghanistan and Gitmo (and who, knows, probably elsewhere), I am reminded of the chilling story of Alyssa Peterson, who I have written about numerous times in the past three years but now with especially sad relevance. Appalled when ordered to take part in interrogations that, no doubt, involved what we would call torture, she refused, then killed herself a few days later, in September 2003.

Peterson, 27, a Flagstaff, Ariz., native, served with C Company, 311th Military Intelligence BN, 101st Airborne. Peterson was an Arabic-speaking interrogator assigned to the prison at our air base in troubled Tal Afar in northwestern Iraq. According to official records, she died on Sept. 15, 2003, from a "non-hostile weapons discharge."

A "non-hostile weapons discharge" leading to death is not unusual in Iraq, often quite accidental, so this one apparently raised few eyebrows. The Arizona Republic, three days after her death, reported that Army officials "said that a number of possible scenarios are being considered, including Peterson's own weapon discharging, the weapon of another soldier discharging, or the accidental shooting of Peterson by an Iraqi civilian." And that might have ended it right there.

But in this case, a longtime radio and newspaper reporter named Kevin Elston, not satisfied with the public story, decided to probe deeper in 2005, "just on a hunch," he told me in late 2006 (there's a chapter about it in my book on Iraq and the media, "So Wrong for So Long"). He made "hundreds of phone calls" to the military and couldn't get anywhere, so he filed a Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] request. When the documents of the official investigation of her death arrived, they contained bombshell revelations. Here's what the Flagstaff public radio station, KNAU, where Elston then worked, reported:

"Peterson objected to the interrogation techniques used on prisoners. She refused to participate after only two nights working in the unit known as the cage. Army spokespersons for her unit have refused to describe the interrogation techniques Alyssa objected to. They say all records of those techniques have now been destroyed."

According to the official report on her death released the following year, she had earlier been "reprimanded" for showing "empathy" for the prisoners.

http://www.editorandpublisher.com/eandp/columns/pressingissues_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003965876

Army More Selective as Economy Lags

By Ann Scott Tyson
Washington Post Staff Writer
Sunday, April 19, 2009

The Army last month stopped accepting felons and recent drug abusers into its ranks as the nation's economic downturn helped its recruiting, allowing it to reverse a decline in recruiting standards that had alarmed some officers.

While shunning those with criminal backgrounds, the Army is also attracting better-educated recruits. It is on track this year to meet, for the first time since 2004, the Pentagon's goal of ensuring that 90 percent of recruits have high school diplomas.

The developments mark a welcome turnaround for the Army, which has the military's biggest annual recruiting quota and had in recent years issued more waivers for recruits with criminal records. That, coupled with unprecedented strains from repeated deployments, led some senior officers to voice

concerns that wartime pressures threatened to break the all-volunteer force.

Now, though, rising unemployment, security gains in Iraq and other factors have helped make military service more attractive and have allowed recruiters to be more choosy, according to military officials and Pentagon data.

Brig. Gen. Joseph Anderson, deputy commander of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, said, "We are not even going to consider" applicants who test positive for drugs or alcohol, or have adult felony convictions such as assault, arson and robbery.

Previously, Army recruits had to wait six months -- and before that, just 45 days -- to reapply after failing a drug test, and some felons could apply for waivers, Army officials said. Every day, the Army processed eight to 10 requests for such drug and felony waivers, Anderson said.

The Army annually granted hundreds of waivers for felons in recent years, reaching a high of 511 in 2007. Now, that category of waiver, for "adult major misconduct," is closed, Anderson said.

Moreover, applicants who have been arrested for juvenile criminal activity such as theft and assault will no longer be considered unless they have high school diplomas, the Army said.

At the same time, recruiters are being more selective on educational standards. Among active-duty Army recruits this fiscal year, 93 percent had high school diplomas through March, compared with 83 percent for 2008 and 79 percent for 2007.

Similarly, the Army expects to surpass the benchmark of at least 60 percent of its recruits being among the top half of scorers on the Armed Forces Qualification Test, the military's aptitude battery. Through March, 66 percent had attained that level. Only 2 percent of recruits scored in the lowest acceptable category of the test. In 2008 and 2007, the Army hit the Pentagon's ceiling of 4 percent.

Several factors have expanded the recruiting pool, leading to a larger number of applicants, while the Army's quota has decreased, from 80,000 active-duty recruits at the start of the year to 65,000, as more soldiers elect to stay in uniform.

Above all, the economic crisis has increased unemployment and reduced job opportunities -- particularly in sectors that tend to employ young people, said Curtis Gilroy, the Pentagon's top recruiting official.

When the recession hits the service sector, "everything from McDonald's to cutbacks at Best Buy and some of the more entry-level jobs . . . this impacts young people more. Those who are last hired tend to be first fired," Gilroy said. "They would then view the military option more favorably."

American youth are increasingly likely to join the military, recent Pentagon polling has shown. Those ages 16 to 21 who said they would "definitely" or "probably" serve in the military in the next few years rose from 9 percent in December 2007 to 13 percent last December, according to Defense Department Youth Polls.

The gains in recruiting are leading the Army to cut its recruiting budget and scale back some bonuses and incentives. The service plans to cut 1,100 active-duty, Reserve and contract recruiters over the next two years, Anderson said.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/18/AR2009041801992_pf.html

Published on Saturday, April 4, 2009 by CommonDreams.org

MADRE Talking Points: Seven Reasons to Oppose a Troop Surge in Afghanistan

by MADRE

We know that elements in the military and Congress exerted great pressure on President Obama to ratchet up the war on Afghanistan. To achieve a more rational and peaceful outcome, we need to exert a counter-pressure. MADRE calls on the Obama administration to chart a whole new course in US-Afghan relations, based on the understanding that the US needs to engage with the rest of the world, not just occupy it.

Seven Reasons to Oppose a Troop Surge

1. More troops will mean more civilian casualties.

* Each year that the occupation drags on, more Afghan civilians are killed. In 2008 alone, more than 2100 civilians were killed, a 40 percent jump over 2007.

* The Taliban is known to attack villages where US soldiers have been. More US troops will make more civilians vulnerable to reprisal attacks.

2. More troops will not resolve the crisis.

* President Obama says the main goal is to stop al-Qaeda and prevent Afghanistan from being used as a base to launch attacks against the US. But he hasn't explained how a troop surge would further that goal or produce any positive results for people in Afghanistan.

* Even Defense Secretary Robert Gates has written that, "The United States cannot kill or capture its way to victory."

* Intensifying the war will not address the underlying reasons for the resurgence of the Taliban, namely:

1. popular outrage and fear of US attacks on civilians,
2. the corruption of the Karzai government,
3. and the support given to the Taliban by Pakistan.

These are political problems that cannot be solved by force.

3. A troop surge has already been tried—and it failed.

* In 2007, the number of US/NATO troops was increased by 45 percent. During that surge, more civilians were killed than in the previous four years combined.

4. Rampant abuses of Afghan women's rights cannot be eliminated by force.

* The Bush Administration justified the invasion of Afghanistan by pointing to the Taliban's systematic abuse of women. But subsequent US policies in Afghanistan did not uphold women's human rights. As a result:

1. 1 in every 3 Afghan women experience physical, psychological or sexual violence
2. 70 to 80 percent of women face forced marriages in Afghanistan
3. Every 30 minutes, an Afghan woman dies during childbirth
4. 87 percent of Afghan women are illiterate
5. 30 percent of girls have access to education in Afghanistan
6. 44 years is the average life expectancy rate for women in Afghanistan

5. US troops are backing an unpopular, corrupt government

* The US hand-picked Afghan President Hamid Karzai, betraying many Afghans' hope for genuine democracy. Karzai's government is seen as somewhere between inept and predatory.

* In its efforts to defeat al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the US has brought to power notorious warlords, drug lords, and brutal militia leaders.

* 60 percent of Afghanistan's Parliament are either warlords or have ties to warlords. One MP, Mohammad Mohaqqiq, is accused of nailing prisoners to walls.

* Other government officials also stand accused of war crimes, but are protected from prosecution by a general amnesty.

* Fear of US-allied warlords and militias leads to increased support for the Taliban, which promises to restore law and order.

6. US Troops are Undermining Humanitarian Operations

* The US has militarized humanitarian aid by creating "provincial reconstruction teams" (PRTs) that blur the line between combat operations and aid delivery.

* The PRTs use humanitarian aid as a bargaining chip to extort information from civilians. The practice turns urgently-needed aid into a weapon of war and endangers recipients by associating them with the US military.

* Aid operations are already threatened by the occupation. Half the country is now inaccessible to UN aid workers. Attacks on aid workers have risen 400% since 2005, leading many agencies to scale back their programs.

7. Most Afghans Want the US Out

* Afghans have a long and proud tradition of resisting foreign occupation. The current US troop build-up is no exception.

* Afghan community groups, women's organizations, and student movements have protested the occupation, but their voices are rarely heard in US media.

* More than 90 percent of Afghans polled by the BBC say they oppose the Taliban, but less than half see the US-led occupation as a positive alternative.

Afghan women want a surge in diplomacy, development and democracy, not troops. Here are 10 things we want to see on Obama's to-do list for Afghanistan:

1. Set a timetable for the withdrawal of US and NATO troops.
2. End US missile strikes in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
3. Demilitarize aid operations and fund reconstruction efforts that benefit Afghans, not US corporations.
4. Promote peace talks between all parties involved in the conflict. Negotiations should include women's organizations and other progressive forces and uphold the principle that human rights, including women's human rights, are non-negotiable.
5. Compensate families and communities hurt by US military operations and pay war reparations.
6. Support local models of governance, such as the Loya Jirga, not a charade of procedural democracy that empowers war criminals.
7. Support demands of the Afghan women's movement to end violence against women, ensure women's access to critical services such as healthcare, education, food and water, and give real meaning to hard-won legal reforms meant to protect women's rights.

8. Create a fund to meet Afghans' urgent humanitarian needs. After 30 years of intervention and war, the US owes Afghanistan nothing less.
9. Support Afghan civil society, particularly women's organizations, which are a crucial counter-force to warlordism, terrorism and government corruption and a key to rebuilding Afghan society.
10. Recognize that ultimately, decisions about what happens in Afghanistan should be made in Afghanistan, not Washington.

MADRE is an international women's human rights organization that works in partnership with community-based women's organizations worldwide to address issues of health and reproductive rights, economic development, education, and other human rights. MADRE provides resources, training, and support to enable our sister organizations to meet concrete needs in their communities while working to shift the balance of power to promote long-term development and social justice. Since we began in 1983, MADRE has delivered nearly 25 million dollars worth of support to community-based women's organizations in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Balkans, and the United States. For more information about MADRE, visit our website at www.madre.org.

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2009/04/04-1>

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Iraq rape-slaying trial begins: former Army soldier charged

Brett Barrouquere, AP News
Apr 06, 2009

The first former Army soldier to be charged as a civilian under a 2000 law that allows him to be prosecuted for alleged crimes committed overseas faces a trial of his peers — in a federal courtroom in Kentucky.

Steven Dale Green, a former member of the 101st Airborne Division, was accused along with four fellow soldiers of raping a 14-year-old girl and killing her and her family in Mahmoudiya, Iraq, but he won't face an Iraqi or military jury.

Instead, Green will face jurors in Paducah, more than 6,700 miles away under the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act. Jury selection started Monday morning.

Congress passed the law in 2000 to allow U.S. authorities to prosecute former military personnel for crimes committed overseas. The law specifically cites a "jurisdictional gap" that leaves perpetrators unpunished for crimes by Americans occurring in countries that won't prosecute them or that the U.S. is unable to investigate or prosecute. It also covers civilians, their spouses and military contractors.

Green faces 17 charges including murder and sexual assault.

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/04/06/as-iraq-rape-trial-begins-attorneys-attack-law-5/>

International coverage of the same story, in U.K. press (with mugshot of the accused):

US soldier goes on trial accused of raping Iraqi girl

Steven Green, 22, who was discharged for a "personality disorder" before the slaying was discovered, faces the death penalty in the civil trial being held in Kentucky. He is the first former army soldier to be charged as a civilian under a law that allows prosecution for alleged crimes committed overseas.

Three other soldiers were given life sentences in the March 2006 atrocity which was allegedly devised over whiskey and a game of cards at a traffic check point in Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad. A fourth soldier who acted as a lookout was sentenced to 27 months in jail.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/5116745/US-soldier-goes-on-trial-accused-of-raping-Iraqi-girl.html>

Book tells of female US soldiers raped by comrades

Reuters North American News Service

Apr 16, 2009 07:54 EST

- * Women in combat zones fear their fellow US soldiers
- * 25 pct rise in sexual assaults in Iraq/Afghanistan
- * Play based on book performed on New York stage

By Christine Kearney

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Female U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have more to fear than roadside bombs or enemy ambushes. They also are at risk of being raped or sexually assaulted by fellow soldiers.

"The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq," a book based on 40 in-depth interviews, recounts the stories of female veterans who served in combat zones and tells of rape, sexual assault and harassment by male counterparts.

Some were warned by officers not to go to the latrine by themselves. One began carrying a knife in case she was attacked by comrades. Others said they felt discouraged to report assaults.

"The horror of it is that it is their own side that is doing this to them," said the book's author, Helen Benedict, a journalism professor at Columbia University in New York. The book was released in the United States Wednesday.

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/04/16/book-tells-of-female-us-soldiers-raped-by-comrades/>

file under: gaming the system

Numbers Claiming POW Benefits Exceed Number of POWs

April 12, 2009

Associated Press

El Paso, TX. - Prisoners of war suffer in ways most veterans don't, enduring humiliating forced marches, torture or other trauma that may haunt them long afterward. In partial recompense, the government extends them special benefits, from free parking and tax breaks to priority in medical treatment.

Trouble is, some of the much-admired recipients of these benefits apparently don't deserve them.

There are only 21 surviving POWs from the first Gulf War in 1991, the Department of Defense says. Yet the Department of Veterans Affairs is paying disability benefits to 286 service members it says were taken prisoner during that conflict, according to data released by VA to The Associated Press.

A similar discrepancy arises with Vietnam POWs. Only 661 officially recognized prisoners returned from that war alive - and about 100 of those have since died, according to Defense figures. But 966 purported Vietnam POWs are getting disability payments, the VA told AP.

Being classified as a POW doesn't directly increase a veteran's monthly disability check. There's no "POW payment."

But a tale of torture and privation can influence whether a vet receives some money or nothing at all in disability payments - and the VA's numbers raise questions about how often such tales are exaggerated or invented altogether.

For one Korean War veteran, a made-up story helped to ensure more than \$400,000 in benefits before his lies were discovered. A Gulf War vet told a tale of beatings and mock executions, though he was never even a POW. Four women Vietnam vets blamed disabilities on their time as prisoners - even though there's no record of female POWs in that war.

At the root of the problem is a disconnect between two branches of government: The Defense Department determines POW status and posts the lists online; the VA awards benefits, but evidently does not always check the DoD list to verify applicants' claims. Result: Numbers of benefit recipients that are higher than the number of recognized POWs.

"They're either phonies or there's a major administrative error somewhere," retired Navy Cmdr. Paul Galanti, who is on a VA advisory panel for POW issues, said when told of the agency's numbers. Galanti, who was shot down over North Vietnam in 1966 and spent nearly seven years in the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" prison, calls the discrepancy "outrageous" and adds: "Somebody ought to get fired for that."

The P.O.W. Network says most phonies are just braggarts puffing at the local Kiwanis luncheon or preening for women in bars, but many have received significant benefits while trading off their borrowed valor.

Edward Lee Daily of Clarksville, Tenn., collected more than \$412,000 in disability and medical benefits over 15 years before being exposed.

Daily, who spent most of the Korean war as a mechanic and clerk, far from the front, took advantage of a fire that destroyed documents at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. He forged paperwork not only to show he was a POW, but that he'd been wounded by shrapnel and given a battlefield promotion to first lieutenant.

Daily pleaded guilty in 2002, and was sentenced to 21 months in prison and ordered to pay restitution. After years of garnishing his monthly Social Security check, the government has recouped just \$7,000. (Daily also gave fabricated information to the AP in interviews for an unrelated story in 1999.)

John Karl Lee, of El Paso, Texas.

Lee's POW tale is set at the time of the Gulf War in 1991. The Army reservist claimed in interviews that he and two comrades were taken while fighting was raging, and only after emptying their M-16s at the pursuing Iraqis.

"We were beaten with the butt of their AK-47s," he told El Paso Inc. in 2002. "Sometimes in the leg, head, even the groin."

The truth was that he and the other two were sightseeing in Kuwait after the war had ended, and their vehicle strayed into Iraq. They were arrested by Iraqi authorities and held for three days at a hotel, where they were fed well, his comrades later said.

"I was held against my will," Lee told the AP in a recent interview.

Lee told AP he received a VA medical card identifying him as a former prisoner. (His documentation included an application to the VBA for POW status.) For a time, he received full disability payments from the U.S. Labor Department, supposedly for injuries and PTSD from his three weeks - not days - in captivity.

When authorities discovered Lee was running a business, they charged him with fraud and making false statements. He was convicted and ordered to pay nearly \$230,000 in restitution and fines.

Lee is now applying to have some VA benefits reinstated.

Take the case of retired Army Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Barr Cayton.

For years, the Texan told stories about how he and another member of his Ranger squad were taken prisoner during a January 1971 firefight in Vietnam. Cayton told of regaining consciousness and finding his arms tied to a branch across his shoulders, and of being marched from village to village with a leash around his neck as a propaganda tool.

"They did degrading, inhumane things to us," he told a Texas newspaper, adding that finally, after 20 days in captivity, he managed to escape.

It was all a lie. Records from the National Archives show that Cayton was accounted for during the entire period he cited - Jan. 1-21 - and that no one from his unit was ever taken prisoner. In fact, Cayton received a Silver Star medal for an action that occurred on Jan. 10, 1971, midway through his alleged captivity.

After years of prodding by P.O.W. Network members, the Army's Criminal Investigation Command looked into Cayton's case. In the end, Cayton was placed in a federal pretrial diversion program and

ordered to correct his records in St. Louis.

However, when the AP filed a Freedom of Information Act request recently for Cayton's file, the documents that came back appeared unchanged - still reflecting 20 days in captivity.

Cayton did not respond to AP calls seeking comment, but in a letter to the Schantags, he apologized "if my statements and representations have misled or offended any of my fellow service members, past and present."

The VA refused to comment on the case. But in response to the Army's inquiry, the agency maintained that Cayton, as a combat veteran, "would have received the same amount of compensation without claiming he was a POW, and accordingly there was no loss to the U.S. Government."

Veterans who served with Cayton have their own views.

He was a "glory seeker" who exaggerated other exploits, too, says then-Capt. Mark Hansen, who regrets recommending Cayton for the Silver Star.

Chuck Ford, who was in Cayton's unit and says there was no enemy contact on the day for which Cayton received that decoration, says, "It infuriates me. And he's drawing MONEY for this? He's stealing from other soldiers?"

The phenomenon of the fake POW is nothing new - frauds have been outed from conflicts going back at least to World War II.

<http://www.military.com/news/article/pow-benefit-claimants-exceed-recorded-pows.html>

US soldier says he saw Sgt. chase, shoot comrades: 2 dead

Apr 14, 2009

FORT STEWART, Ga. (Map, News) - An Army sergeant, his face lit by the muzzle flash of his rifle, chased a superior officer at their base in Iraq until he fell, then stood over the man and fired two shots into him, a soldier in their unit testified Tuesday.

Staff Sgt. John Dresel was the first U.S. soldier to testify that he witnessed Sgt. Joseph Bozicevich shoot a fellow soldier during Bozicevich's Article 32 hearing, which entered its second day Tuesday.

Bozicevich, 39, of Minneapolis is charged with killing a fellow team leader in his unit, Sgt. Wesley Durbin, and their squad leader, Staff Sgt. Darris Dawson, whom Dresel said fell to the ground pleading before Bozicevich shot him twice Sept. 14 at a small U.S. patrol base south of Baghdad.

The hearing at Fort Stewart, similar to a civilian grand jury, will determine if there's enough evidence to try the case in a court-martial.

http://www.examiner.com/a-1960946~US_soldier_says_he_saw_Sgt_chase_shoot_comrade.html

US Army sergeant convicted of murdering four Iraqi detainees

A US Army sergeant has been convicted of the "execution-style" murder of four bound and blindfolded Iraqi detainees.

By Tom Leonard in New York

Last Updated: 11:23PM BST 15 Apr 2009

Prosecutors told a court martial in Germany on Wednesday that Master Sgt John Hatley acted as "judge, jury and executioner" of the four men, captured in the Baghdad area in the spring of 2007.

After Hatley's unit was engaged in an exchange of fire, the men were seen fleeing a building which was found to contain assault rifles, grenades and sniper rifles.

The court martial heard that the four were not going to be prosecuted due to lack of evidence and would normally have been set free.

Two other soldiers, who have already been found guilty of the killings, testified that the prisoners were instead taken to a deserted site near a canal in Baghdad's West Rasheed neighbourhood.

There, they were shot point-blank in the back of the head.

Captain Derrick Grace, prosecuting, said that evidence had pointed to "a complete breakdown of discipline and crimes that are among the worst of a soldier".

Capt Grace argued that "good soldiers don't murder people", adding that the prisoners were "zip-tied, blindfolded and stationary".

Hatley faces the possibility of life in prison without parole.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/5161169/US-Army-sergeant-convicted-of-murdering-four-Iraqi-detainees.html>

USS Cole victims' families to get at least \$200K after judge unfreezes Sudanese money

by Larry O'Dell

AP News

Apr 21, 2009 18:51 EST

Nearly nine years after 17 sailors were killed in a terrorist attack on the USS Cole, some relatives of the victims are set to receive at least \$200,000 each from Sudan, a lawyer said Tuesday.

The 33 spouses, parents and children of the sailors have fought in court for the compensation for six years. They successfully argued the Sudanese government provided support, including money and

training, that allowed al-Qaida suicide bombers to attack the Navy destroyer at a refueling stop at the Yemen port of Aden on Oct. 12, 2000. The suicide bombers were in a small boat and tore a gaping 40-foot hole in the destroyer.

"Not one penny can replace the life of my child," said Mona Gunn of Virginia Beach, whose 22-year-old son Cherone was killed in the attack. "The sad thing is, not all family members are receiving compensation. There are mothers and fathers who lost children who aren't going to get compensation, and siblings who lost a brother or sister."

Twenty-six other parents who sued Sudan were not eligible for compensation, which went instead to their child's spouse or children, a judge in Norfolk, Va., ruled in 2007.

U.S. District Judge Kimba Wood's order freed the funds under the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002, which requires the release of blocked assets to satisfy a judgment against a "terrorist party." The State Department has designated Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1993, Wood said.

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/04/21/lawyer-uss-cole-families-to-get-at-least-200k/>

sidebar

file under: S.N.A.F.U

Report: Hackers break into Pentagon's fighter jet project

They downloaded terabytes of data on a \$300B stealth fighter

<http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=009131881>

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World War II-era chemical munitions dumped at deep-sea sites off the coast of Oahu (Hawaii)

The Associated Press

Posted : Monday Apr 6, 2009

HONOLULU — Several thousand World War II-era chemical munitions have been found by deep-diving submersibles under a joint Army-University of Hawaii team. So far, no large cache of weapons has been discovered.

The U.S. military dumped some 2,500 tons of weapons containing lethal mustard, cyanide, lewisite, cyanogens and chloride at three deep-sea sites several miles off Oahu. More than 16,000 individual bombs were dumped there.

Over 17 days, a \$3 million effort involving remote devices and the university's two submersibles found several thousand bombs at depths of 1,500 feet by using sonar. The examined area totaled 240 square miles.

Water and sediment samples also were taken near the bombs that were found. The Army has no plans to remove the munitions.

http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/04/ap_hawaii_dumped_weapons_040609/

Military used pigs in blasts to test armor

By Tom Vanden Brook, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Military researchers have dressed live pigs in body armor and strapped them into Humvee simulators that were then blown up with explosives to study the link between roadside bomb blasts and brain injury.

For an 11-month period that ended in December, researchers subjected pigs and rats to about 200 blasts, according to Pentagon documents and interviews. The explosions have ranged in intensity, wounding some of the pigs and killing others. Roadside bombs are the top killer of U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Blasting pigs raises "red flags," said Martin Stephens, vice president for animal research issues at the Humane Society of the United States.

"This is a worthy goal, trying to prevent soldiers from being injured by roadside bombs," Stephens said. "I think the relevance of this is highly questionable. People are not pigs."

Col. Geoffrey Ling, who led the study, said pigs are good subjects because their brains are more similar to human brains than those of rats. Pig hearts and lungs are also similar to humans'.

The Pentagon complied with policies that ensure that a minimal number of animals were used in the testing and that they were treated humanely at all times, Walker said. The next round of the testing is scheduled for later this year.

Stephens called on the Pentagon to end testing on pigs. "Is this the best they can do after several years of losing soldiers to roadside bombs?" he said.

U.S. car companies used live animals, including pigs, for crash tests until the early 1990s. They stopped after protests from animal rights groups, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2009-04-06-pigs_N.htm

US to spend \$6 billion on Cold War weapons cleanup

by Richard Lardner, AP News
Apr 22, 2009

The Energy Department will spend \$6 billion as part of President Barack Obama's stimulus package to clean up nuclear weapons sites at Cold War-era facilities, with more than half the money going to sites in Washington and South Carolina, a senior official told Congress on Wednesday.

The government will focus on decontaminating and demolishing tainted facilities, removing radioactive waste and trying to restore soil and groundwater, Ines Triay, the department's acting assistant secretary for environmental management, told a Senate Armed Services panel.

More than \$1.9 billion will be spent on cleanup at the Hanford site, a former plutonium production complex on the Columbia River in southeastern Washington. The site produced plutonium used in the first nuclear bomb. The government said there are more than 53 million gallons of radioactive and chemically hazardous waste in 177 underground storage tanks there along with 2,300 tons of spent nuclear fuel and nine tons of plutonium.

In South Carolina, the government will spend more than \$1.6 billion at Savannah River Site to shut down nuclear reactors and ship more than 4,500 cubic meters of waste out of the state.

Triay told the Senate panel that cleanup projects have been delayed to pay for more urgent programs. She said the total cost estimate for necessary cleanup is \$14.3 billion.

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/04/22/us-to-spend-6-billion-on-cold-war-weapons-cleanup-2/>

Pentagon Closes Office Accused of Issuing Propaganda Under Bush

By Thom Shanker
Published: April 15, 2009

WASHINGTON — A Pentagon office responsible for coordinating Defense Department information campaigns overseas has been abolished in an effort by the Obama administration to distance itself from past practices that some military officers called propaganda, senior officials said Wednesday.

The office was created in 2007 to be the central point within the vast Pentagon bureaucracy and far-flung military to coordinate the Defense Department's overseas information (sic) efforts.

Questions over the proper role of the Pentagon in public diplomacy have lingered since it was disclosed in 2002 that the Defense Department had created the Office of Strategic Influence; that office, a forerunner of the Pentagon public diplomacy office, was shut down after members of Congress expressed concerns that its behind-the-scenes efforts to shape public sentiment in wartime might undermine the military's credibility.

Even in a supporting role, the Defense Department has far greater resources in money, trained communications personnel and broadcast and print technology than any other government agency or department.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/16/us/politics/16policy.html?
_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/16/us/politics/16policy.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss&pagewanted=all)

Ex-Marine speaks out against Iraq war

Corvallis man who served two tours in Iraq plans three Rogue Valley, Oregon, presentations

By Paul Fattig, *Mail Tribune*

For Benjamin "Benji" Lewis, the turning point began when a crying Iraqi woman approached his dug-in position during the first siege of Fallujah in April 2004.

Lewis, 23, was serving as the mortar man and the acting linguist for his Marine Corps unit.

"It was a pretty intense time — for the first five days we had little or no sleep," recalled the Corvallis resident. "This woman was approaching our position. People started shooting at her." Lewis quickly began yelling for a cease-fire. "It was evident she wasn't a threat — I ran out of my foxhole to see what was going on," he said. "Her face was encrusted with salt crystals from crying. She let me know that the night before, her house had collapsed from the mortars, that she had lost two children."

He and others in his group asked their commander to have her taken to a Red Cross site. Their request was denied.

"So we gave her a bottle of water and sent her back," he said. "I was the one responsible for putting mortar rounds on her house ... this was the first sign to me that maybe we weren't in Iraq on a humanitarian mission."

Lewis is speaking out against the war in three presentations in the Rogue Valley this week, beginning Friday evening in Ashland. Cpl. Lewis completed his four-year hitch, including two combat tours to Iraq, in the Corps in 2007, receiving an honorable discharge. "I was a good Marine — I never got into trouble," he said.

It wasn't until he was notified last October that he was being considered for involuntary activation in the individual ready reserves and a third Iraq deployment that he began speaking out. **Under most enlistment contracts, the IRR program provides that a Marine can be called up for four years following discharge.**

"By this time, I made up my mind not to participate," Lewis said, noting he is opposed to the war both on legal and moral grounds and challenges the legality of the IRR program. The Marine Corps notified him on April 16 that his IRR orders had been canceled. But the college student is continuing to speak out and counsel other Iraq War veterans.

"The general feeling among many is that they are struggling with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)," he said. "Some I've talked to want to be recalled so they can go back to Iraq and die there for atonement."

Born on a U.S. Air Force Base in Lubbock, Texas, where his father was a career officer, Lewis joined the Corps in 2003. After being trained to fire mortars, he was selected for Arabic language training. From Fallujah, his unit was sent to Haditha, where the Marines established their headquarters in a

police station for several months.

"When we came back on leave, we found out the insurgents had executed all the police in a soccer stadium," he said, adding the police were killed apparently because of their association with the Americans. "We felt awful."

<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090429/NEWS/904290314>

Tulsa Peace Fellowship's counter-recruitment update/digest for May 2009
masthead

who we are:

The website for the **Tulsa Peace Fellowship** is:
www.tulsapeacefellowship.org

TPF meets monthly @ **Peace House in Tulsa**
inside the Unitarian Universalist church at 1314 N. Greenwood Ave, in Tulsa, close to corner of Pine & Greenwood
just north of the OSU-Tulsa campus

If you have not already done so, please join the **new social networking tool for TPF on Ning**, in lieu of TPFtalks on yahoogroups, which has fallen into disuse Thank you! You can check out our new tool here: <http://tulsapeacefellowship.ning.com> (new for 2009) Also still going strong: our announcement list on yahoo! tulsapeace@yahoogroups.com (since 2002) Go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/> and search for "tulsapeace"

Through its counter-recruitment task force, TPF is a member of the **National Network in Opposition to the Militarization of Youth (NNOMY)**
On the web: http://www.nnomy.org/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=216&Itemid=91

Tulsa Peace Fellowship is non-partisan, and is open to 3rd parties, progressive Dems, libertarians, etc. TPF is the activist wing of the peace movement in Eastern Oklahoma **"Waging Peace One Person at a Time"**.

Peace House-Tulsa is an incubator for peace and justice. The Peace House building can host a wide range of activities: classes, discussion groups, meditation, music-making, social gatherings, retreats, etc. While some activities may be limited by the size and amenities of this building, our imaginations need not be limited!

If you enjoyed this news digest and/or found this update useful, please consider making a donation of time, money, or effort to the Tulsa Peace Fellowship. Details on tax status available.

info for TPF counter-recruitment-- contact by phone 918 906 0828

The next regular meeting of the Fellowship will be held

on Thursday, May 7 2009, 6:15 PM – 7:30 PM

--including members from other local non-partisan groups such as the Tulsa chapter of "Season for Non-Violence," the Tulsa University chapter of Amnesty International, ImpeachOK1.org, TulsaTruth.org, the Center for Racial Justice in Tulsa, and the Tulsa Interfaith Alliance.
--including a meeting of the counter-recruitment campaign activists

Come join us! Especially parents, guardians, and students in the Tulsa Public Schools system who are interested in countering the presence of military recruiters on school grounds.

An archive of TPF counter-recruitment updates and other related TPF material is available to members online:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tulsapeace/>

You must sign in to yahoo! groups to see the archived "message history"

TPF messages have been archived online since 2002

TPF was founded some 30 years ago.

Current membership online: 701 subscribers

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further information

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Strength Through Peace: Out of Iraq

Accountability: Indict & Imprison Bush & Cheney for War Crimes

JROTC: Out of Our Schools

Schools as Military-Free Zones

Alternatives to War: Department of Peace & cabinet-level Secretary of Peace

dopcampaign_tulsaconnection@cox.net

armywrong@cox.net

THE 10 REASONS

Ten excellent reasons not to join the military:

a.. You May Be Killed, Even By Mistake

- b.. You May Kill Others Who Do Not Deserve to Die
- c.. You May Be Injured
- d.. You May Not Receive Proper Medical Care
- e.. You May Suffer Long-term Health Problems
- f.. You May Be Lied To
- g.. You May Face Discrimination
- h.. You May Be Asked to Do Things Against Your Beliefs
- i.. You May Find It Difficult to Leave the Military
- j.. You Have Other Choices, including the Choice to Learn a Marketable Skill

for more info:

<http://www.10reasonsbook.com/medcare.htm>