

Truth in Recruiting - "Don't Believe the Hype!"

The Tulsa Peace Fellowship's Counter-Recruitment Update/Digest, for Sept 2009
(scroll down for details about any story)

lead story:

Two guests from C-R outfit in Dallas/Ft. Worth share their success strategies with the OCC

— counter-recruitment workshop in Oklahoma City, hosted by Oklahoma Center for Conscience

— "Peaceful Vocations," the Texas-based counter-recruitment organization, is online:

<http://www.peacefulvocations.org/>



Schools in NC let Quakers pitch counter-recruitment

— a Quaker peace activist is granted her request for access to high school students so she can warn them about joining the military

— For years, Sally Ferrell had been asking permission to talk to students about alternatives to joining the military

related story:

Veterans start over as colleges ignore experience

— College-bound veterans find it's back to basics as schools ignore years of military experience

— Military experience considered useless by some university admissions boards

fact:

At least one in five colleges and universities in the U.S. do not give academic credit for military experience.

related story:

Vets shred uniforms to heal through art

— The Combat Paper Project, a Vermont-based collective of combat vets who became artists after leaving the military, has spent the past year holding coast-to-coast workshops aimed at teaching former service members to help themselves by recycling fatigues into artwork.

file under: active-duty resistance

New video promoting "Under the Hood Cafe" (close to Ft. Hood, TX): "The Resisters," by Casey J Porter

— includes interview footage with Spc. Victor Agayo, conscientious objector refusing to deploy to Afghanistan

— "Under the Hood" is also mentioned in this story about Sgt. Travis Bishop, inspired by Agayo's example: <http://www.truthout.org/081209A>

— video link: <http://www.vimeo.com/5901045>

quote: "Soldiers and civilians work together to create balance and support each other where the Army fails."

Report Card on Obama's Sec'y of Education, Arne Duncan

— the **Military-Corporate Bias** in Chicago-area schools under the now National Secretary of Education

— Student outcomes in the Chicago School District prove that it is a poor model to follow

facts & figures:

As CEO of Chicago Public Schools, Arne Duncan he personally oversaw the attempted **closing of 20 Chicago public schools** in low-income neighborhoods of color in 2004.

Chicago's fourth and eighth graders ranked, with only one exception, in the bottom half of all districts nationwide in math, reading, and science in 2003, 2005 and 2007. In addition, from 2004 to 2008, the Chicago Public Schools district failed to make "adequate yearly progress."

Chicago is the most militarized school district in the nation. Chicago Public Schools has five military high schools, more than any city in the nation, and 21 "middle school cadet corps" programs. All but one of the military high schools are in African American communities, and all the middle school cadet programs are in overwhelmingly black or Latina/o schools

The cost of going to college is rapidly spiraling out of control, as evidenced in a recent report in which every state except California received an "F" for college affordability. Meanwhile, in non-militaristic countries, such as Germany, college is tuition free.

quote:

A call to abolish ROTC, to help end American Imperialism

"Given the growing constraints on the federal budget, we should abolish the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and other long-standing programs that promote militarism in our schools."

~Chalmers Johnson

from the archives

Lyrics to "Feel Like I'm Fixing To Die" by Country Joe McDonald

— standing ovation at Woodstock, on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBdeCxJmcAo>

excerpt: "Come on mothers be the first ones on your block, to have your boy come home in a box"

page two:

The Hell of War Comes Home: Newspaper Series Documents Murder, Suicide, Kidnappings by Iraq Vets

A startling two-part series published in the *Gazette* newspaper of Colorado Springs titled "Casualties of War" examines a part of war seldom discussed by the media or government officials: the difficulty of returning to civilian life after being trained to be a killer. The story focuses on a single battalion based at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment. Soldiers from the brigade have been involved in brawls, beatings, rapes, drunk driving, drug deals, domestic violence, shootings, stabbings, kidnapping and suicides. The Army unit's murder rate is 114 times the rate for Colorado Springs.

— *Democracy Now!* does an interview with the reporter who broke the story and gets the Army's response to the **list of atrocities committed by Iraq veterans on U.S. soil**, as laid out by Dave Philips, in his newspaper articles.

http://www.democracynow.org/2009/7/30/the_hell_of_war_comes_home

sidebar

Army arrests civilian for desertion after bizarre mix-up in Seattle

— Hapless U.S. civilian **blames military recruiter** from 10 years ago, who never processed his paperwork to "de-enlist"

Soldier gets 1 month in jail for refusing deployment to Afghanistan

— A Fort Hood soldier was sentenced to a month in jail for refusing to deploy to Afghanistan

— Spc. Agayo, conscientious objector, believes that the **Afghan war violates international law** and that his refusal to serve is justified

file under: arbitrary imprisonment

Conscientious Objector Sentenced to 12 months

— Another Fort Hood TX soldier was sentenced more harshly for his stance as a conscientious objector

— Sgt. Bishop believes all war is wrong, after religious conversion experience; seeking legal status as CO

quote:

"If every soldier in the Army who disobeyed an order could claim it was because they weren't notified of [the possibility of filing for] conscientious objector status, **we probably wouldn't have a military any more.**"

~Maj. Matthew McDonald, who served as the judge, in Sgt. Bishop's case. His defense argued his right to file for CO status is relevant to his case.

related story:

Army Imprisons Its Wayward Soldiers

— U.S. Army admits it doesn't know what to do with contingent kept under lock & key at Ft. Bragg

— AWOL soldiers caught in legal black hole

quote:

"**Military justice is arbitrary** and if your chain of command is bad, it means everything up is bad."

~Staff Sergeant Jeffrey Nelbach, a **former military recruiter**, now ironically imprisoned by the same military he used to shuck & jive for

sidebar

U.S. Apache Helicopter Kills **Cucumber Farmers in Afghan Village**

— file under: increasingly aerial occupation

related story:

US Copter Opens Fire on Afghan Medical Clinic

file under: war crime committed by U.S. forces

quote:

Air cadet programs appeal to the psychotic

“Every boy in this society grows up wanting to fly a fighter jet –wouldn't it be fun?-- but *you gotta be a murderer to fly one* -- is the only catch.

~Scott Horton, the host of antiwar.com radio

<http://antiwar.com/radio/2009/08/01/eric-stoner/>

file under: sadistic sub-culture

4 American soldiers in Iraq charged with cruelty, maltreatment of comrades, US military says

— The four Multi-National Division-South soldiers, based in Basra, are originally from Oklahoma, Texas, Michigan and California

file under: What?! There are rules during wartime?

Hillary Clinton suggests US could join war crimes court (ICC)

— Sec'y State Clinton expresses regret that US hasn't yet joined the International Criminal Court

file under: revisiting past horrors committed by U.S. Army

William Calley, former Army Lt. **convicted on 22 counts of murder in the infamous My Lai Massacre in Vietnam, publicly apologized**

quote:

“If you are asking why I did not stand up to them when I was given the illegal orders, I will have to say that I was a second lieutenant getting orders from my commander and I followed them — foolishly, I guess.”

~W. Calley, convicted war criminal, sentenced to life imprisonment; his commanding officer was acquitted

follow up on Military Sexual Trauma (MST), meaning rape

SWAN Executive Director testifies about **sexual assaults committed by U.S. soldiers on other U.S. soldiers**

— Hearing held by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Service Women's Action Network (SWAN)

<http://www.servicewomen.org/>

A non-partisan, non-profit organization founded by female veterans, based out of New York City

Dedicated to spreading the word that "no woman should join the military."

related story:

3 Bragg soldiers indicted in slayings of 2 female U.S. soldiers

backpage:

file under: soldiers as burn victims

Toxic exposure torments soldiers long after their tours end

related story:

VA won't pay benefits to Marine whose injuries came from vaccine

facts & figures:

The military's compensation program for traumatic injury does not approve some 37 percent of claims.

analysis:

The Secret Shame of our Empire of Bases

by Chalmers Johnson

book review:

Engaging collection of essays, *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts*, by Catherine Lutz (Brown University)

— Scholars consider the **violence, pollution, and resentment bred by U.S. military bases abroad**

epitaph for this edition of "Truth in Recruiting"

The final surviving British WWI veteran is laid to rest after dying at the age of 111

— Mr. Patch's own words about the fighting in the trenches, fashioned into a protest song

— recorded by the pop group Radiohead (YouTube link provided below)

The Tulsa Peace Fellowship's Counter-Recruitment Update/Digest, for Sept 2009
lead story

"Peaceful Vocations" uses court case precedents set in other states to institute effective counter-recruitment presence in North Texas

Two guests from C-R outfit in Dallas/Ft. Worth share their success strategies with the OCC, in Oklahoma City

Event hosted by the Oklahoma Center for Conscience, held Aug 10, 2009

by T. Nuspl, for the Tulsa Peace Fellowship

Ft Worth - Peaceful Vocations, the counter-recruitment outfit, is making visits to each public school in its area at least twice per year, plus attending college recruiting days on school grounds. Peaceful Vocations has used the law, and the decisions by various courts in the U.S., to uphold and put into practice its right to have the same degree of access to high school students as do military recruiters. It is a long held complaint among counter-recruitment task forces across the nation, associated with peace groups such as the Oklahoma Center for Conscience, that the so-called "No Child Left Behind"

legislation enacted under the Bush-Cheney administration gave military recruiters a privileged degree of access that was both unjust and unfair to the students targeted for recruitment.

According to one member of Peaceful Vocations, their campaign to get counter-recruitment booklets in to ALL of the schools in their district, as well as pamphlets responding to the hype used by recruiters to inveigle students into joining up, was a long-term struggle.

"This is the hardest work you will ever do," said Yvette Richardson, a U.S. Army veteran involved in the coordination of Peaceful Vocations.

In addition to visits to school grounds, Peaceful Vocations also engages in weekly events with community service groups, such as providing back-to-school packets that include the essential "Opt Out" form, so that students who object to having their personal details and private contact information divulged to military recruiters can use an official means of redress, to prevent their school administrators from handing over the private information to the recruiters. Peaceful Vocations has its spokespersons speak at rallies, such as at the recent Cesar Chavez parade, and they march purposefully right behind the ROTC contingent in such parades. Their large 5' x 10' banner "BOOKS NOT BOMBS" is often visible at community events, in parks, and in various other public spaces. In particular, the outfit is often invited to community events hosted by Hispanics, Native Americans, or African Americans, groups that are often targeted as part of the poverty draft. Boys & Girls clubs have also invited Peaceful Vocations to speak in about 15 districts.

Essential to the successes of Peaceful Vocations, according to Yvette Richardson and Diane Wood, a retired Registered Nurse also involved in coordinating the group, is a ruling made in the U.S. Ninth District Court. In San Diego, a counter-recruitment outfit called the Committee to Opposing the Military Draft was granted a huge civil rights victory, in a recent court case in their district. The watershed decision stated that groups presenting alternatives to the misinformation provided by military recruiters had a right to provide their views on school grounds, in opposition to the recruiters attempting to prey on high school students.

Although the decision was binding for that district only, the Ninth District's decision has become a precedent for courts in five or six other districts. School attorneys are now aware of this watershed decision. As a result, in an understanding reached with public school districts in North Texas, Peaceful Vocations is able to have access to school grounds and talk to students every time that a military recruiter makes a presentation in a school, to distribute its literature wherever pro-recruitment propaganda is deposited with school counsellors, as well as to place posters side by side with any pro-recruitment poster that is found on school grounds.

The school boards have determined that the principals of individual schools are obliged to allow the counter-recruiters into their schools, as per the terms of the law. In theory, should a recruiter attempt to pull a student out of a class session in order to give them the "hard sell," a group like Peaceful Vocations should be given a chance to provide the antidote to the misinformation that the recruiter may have provided, in the interest of having students make fully-informed decisions about their futures.

In a success particular to North Texas, Peaceful Vocations discovered that schools were allowing posters for recruiting purposes that had both machine guns and/or pistols on display, contrary to district rules about posters in hallways and counseling offices on school grounds. Now there are no guns in any military displays on school grounds, in the schools where Peaceful Vocations is vigilant. This is a far cry better than other school districts, such as in Oklahoma, where so-called instructors are tolerated who even bring mock guns into the classroom.

In addition to community activists and veterans, Peaceful Vocations also has the cooperation of the students themselves. With the help of intrepid students, Peaceful Vocations is able to report back to the school board about violations committed on school grounds by military recruiters and/or JROTC "instructors." With the help of students, Peaceful Vocations hopes to emphasize the need to de-militarize area public schools. Students have the right to organize groups on school grounds for the express purpose of de-militarizing their respective schools. Peaceful Vocations means to be a resource for such students.

Among plans for the immediate future, Peaceful Vocations will be hosting "Back-to-School" "Opt-Out Parties" for students enrolled in Ft. Worth area schools.

byline: T. Nuspl is President (2009) of the Tulsa Peace Fellowship. He is also a member of the TPF counter-recruitment task force designed to provide alternative information to counter the propaganda provided by DoD and Pentagon advertisements and/or by recruiters targeting youth, in particular high school students susceptible to joining up without a full understanding of the risks and the downfalls involved in being part of the U.S. military machine. He has also presented counter-recruitment information to college-level students.

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School lets Quaker counter recruiting pitches

By Mike Baker - The Associated Press

Posted Aug 12, 2009

RALEIGH, N.C. — A rural North Carolina school district with a proud military tradition has surrendered to a Quaker peace activist's request for access to high school students so she can warn them about joining the military, attorneys said Wednesday.

For years, Sally Ferrell had been asking permission to talk to students about alternatives to joining the military. The Wilkes County School Board had denied her access, even though military recruiters are typically allowed in schools.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which argued that Ferrell's plight was a matter of free speech, said attorneys reached a settlement this week with school officials granting the group, North Carolina Peace Action, the same opportunities as military recruiters.

Ferrell said in a statement she looks forward to providing job-related information. She has previously touted AmeriCorps and other alternatives to the military.

The government-funded AmeriCorps offers a range of volunteer opportunities including housing construction, youth outreach, disaster response and caring for the elderly. Most participants receive an annual stipend of slightly less than \$12,000 for working 10 months to a year.

In part, the agreement puts new restrictions on all types of recruiters. Instead of allowing recruiters to

set up a table in the cafeteria to meet the students directly, Superintendent Stephen Laws said they will instead meet only with students who specifically sign up to hear about opportunities.

“We’re extremely pleased with the agreement, and we’re excited about moving on,” Laws said.

Recruiters have been relying more heavily on high schools to help fill the ranks of the all-volunteer military. Thousands of people like Ferrell have responded with counter-recruiting groups, saying the military often gives misleading information.

Activists have complained the military often targets high schools in poor and rural areas, where graduating students have limited options. Wilkes County, on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains about 50 miles west of Winston-Salem, has been hurt by the exodus of manufacturing jobs. Its June unemployment rate was 13.2 percent.

Ferrell first approached the school district in 2005, but Laws denied access. Two years later, the group reached an agreement with the school board allowing Ferrell in the high schools, but Laws revoked that privilege shortly after.

“We allow recruiters into the schools to recruit for post-high school opportunities. But she wasn’t offering that,” he said last year.

http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/08/ap_military_schools_recruiter_quakers_081209/

related story:

Veterans start over as colleges ignore experience

College-bound veterans find it's back to basics as schools ignore years of military experience

Alan Scher Zagier, AP News
Aug 20, 2009

Twelve years of military service left Donald Spradling highly trained in satellite imagery, nuclear engineering and foreign intelligence analysis. None of that made a difference to the University of Missouri.

Nearly half a million veterans are expected on college campuses this year as part of the new GI Bill. The surge is leading to a call for schools to re-examine their policies of declining to grant college credit for military training and service.

An estimated one in five colleges and universities do not give academic credit for military education, according to a recent survey of 723 schools by the American Council on Education that is believed to be the first systematic measure. Even more of the schools, 36 percent, said they don't award credit for military occupational training.

For Spradling and others, that can mean spending more on tuition, stretching financial aid or GI Bill scholarships and delaying their entry into the work force.

At Boston College, a private school, the standard has always been to accept credit only for institutions of higher education, said school spokesman Jack Dunn.

"That holds true for members of the armed forces as well," he said.

Many college-bound veterans said military recruiters often offer an unrealistic portrayal of what awaits in academia, suggesting their military coursework and training will count for college credit.

Army veteran Michael McIntosh noted that Missouri's policy meant he could not use his experience jumping from planes as part of an airborne unit to fulfill a physical education requirement — even as other students could enroll in scuba diving or similar pursuits.

"I would have liked for them to at least acknowledge it," he said. "It might have been a military education, but it was still a lot of work and a lot of training."

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/08/20/veterans-start-over-as-colleges-ignore-experience/>

Vets shred uniforms to heal through art

By Russ Bynum - The Associated Press

Posted : Saturday Aug 8, 2009

SAVANNAH, Ga. — Tired of taking pills prescribed to suppress his pain, Zach Choate decided to wrestle head-on with the trauma that followed him home from Iraq. He began by using a razor to shred his Army uniform to bits.

"I'm hoping I come out of this a little more whole, a little bit more at peace," said Choate, who was a gunner in the 10th Mountain Division. "I'm not an anti-war, anti-military person. This is just me fixing me."

He chopped his camouflage jacket into inchlong strips. He diced the American flag patch on its right shoulder, along with a prescription for sleeping pills he found in a pocket. Even the Purple Heart ribbon Choate earned after being wounded by a roadside bomb got torn into tiny threads.

The 25-year-old soldier from Cartersville joined a handful of Iraq veterans at a Savannah art studio last week to destroy uniforms that had become painful reminders of their combat experience, using them to create something new.

The young vets mixed the jigsaw pieces with water and beat them into pulp to make sheets of paper — blank canvasses on which they could write, paint or screen images to tell their personal war stories.

The Combat Paper Project, a Vermont-based collective of combat vets who became artists after leaving the military, has spent the past year holding coast-to-coast workshops aimed at teaching former service members to help themselves by recycling fatigues into artwork.

Drew Cameron, who became opposed to the Iraq war after serving in an Army artillery unit during the 2003 invasion, started the group after moving to Burlington, Vt., where he learned paper making from a local artist while also becoming active with Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Cameron, 27, saw it as a way reach out to other Iraq veterans haunted by memories of friends slain in battle and men they had killed, wounded physically and psychologically by bomb and mortar explosions, and struggling to direct their own lives after years of being told what to do by the military.

"I just want to cut this thing into a million pieces," said Jason Hurd, tearing the seams of the desert camouflage jacket he wore in Iraq in 2004 and 2005 with the Tennessee National Guard.

After spending 10 years in the military, the 29-year-old from Savannah said destroying his uniform was a way of proving that his life is now his own. He says he hasn't shaved or cut his hair since leaving the Guard two years ago.

"When you hold these strips in your hand, you think about all the times you ironed it and spit polished your boots — all that was something the Army made you do," Hurd said. "This is my uniform now. I'm not Army property anymore, and neither is it."

The vets dunked their uniform scraps into water swirling through a belt-driven machine that beat the mixture into pulp before being drained into 18-gallon tubs. The pulp was sifted through a screen into sheets of paper, then carefully smoothed and stuck onto the windows outside to dry in the summer heat.

The finished paper is thick, almost like cardboard, with an olive-gray color accented by fine threads of red, blue and purple from any awards and decorations the former soldiers add.

http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/08/ap_combatart_080609/

The Duncan Doctrine

The Military-Corporate Bias of the New Secretary of Education

By Andy Kroll, Jan 2009

In a glowing introduction to the media, President-elect Barack Obama named Arne Duncan, the chief executive officer of the Chicago Public Schools system (CPS), as his nominee for U.S. Secretary of Education. "When it comes to school reform," the President-elect said, "Arne is the most hands-on of hands-on practitioners. For Arne, school reform isn't just a theory in a book -- it's the cause of his life. And the results aren't just about test scores or statistics, but about whether our children are developing the skills they need to compete with any worker in the world for any job."

He was also regularly hailed as a "reformer," fearless when it came to challenging the educational status quo and more than willing to shake up hidebound, moribund public school systems.

Yet a closer investigation of Duncan's record in Chicago casts doubt on that label.

Disturbing as well is the prominence of Duncan's belief in offering a key role in public education to the military. Chicago's school system is currently the most militarized in the country, boasting five military academies, nearly three dozen smaller Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs within existing high schools, and numerous middle school Junior ROTC programs. More troubling yet, the military

academies he's started are nearly all located in low-income, minority neighborhoods. This merging of military training and education naturally raises concerns about whether such academies will be not just education centers, but recruitment centers as well.

The Militarization of Secondary Education

Today, the flagship projects in CPS's militarization are its five military academies, affiliated with either the Army, Navy, or Marines. All students -- or cadets, as they're known -- attending one of these schools are required to enroll as well in the academy's Junior ROTC program. That means cadets must wear full military uniforms to school everyday, and undergo daily uniform inspections. As part of the academy's curriculum, they must also take a daily ROTC course focusing on military history, map reading and navigation, drug prevention, and the branches of the Department of Defense.

In addition, military personnel from the U.S. armed services teach alongside regular teachers in each academy, and also fill administrative roles such as academy "commandants." Three of these military academies were created in part with Department of Defense appropriations -- funds secured by Illinois lawmakers -- and when the proposed Air Force Academy High School opens this fall, CPS will be the only public school system in the country with Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps high school academies.

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 discipline, important as it may be for an army, hardly aligns with these pedagogical values.

Of no less concern are the types of students Chicago's military academies are trying to attract. All of CPS's military academies (except the Rickover Naval Academy) are located in low-income neighborhoods with primarily black and/or Hispanic residents. As a result, student enrollment in the academies consists almost entirely of minorities. Whites, who already represent a mere 9% of the students in the Chicago system, make up only 4% of the students enrolled in the military academies.

There is obviously a correlation between these low-income, minority communities, the military academies being established in them, and the long-term recruitment needs of the U.S. military. The schools essentially function as recruiting tools, despite the expectable military disclaimers. The Chicago Tribune typically reported in 1999 that the creation of the system's first military school in the historically black community of Bronzeville grew, in part, out of "a desire for the military to increase the pool of minority candidates for its academies." And before the House Armed Services Committee in 2000, the armed services chiefs of staff testified that 30%-50% of all Junior ROTC cadets later enlist in the military. Organizations opposing the military's growing presence in public schools insist that it's no mistake the number of military academies in Chicago is on the rise at a time when the U.S. military has had difficulty meeting its recruitment targets while fighting two unpopular wars.

It seems clear enough that, when it comes to the militarization of the Chicago school system, whatever Duncan's goals, the results are likely to be only partly "educational."

When measured on a national scale, Duncan's record looks a lot less impressive. In comparison to other major urban school districts (including Los Angeles, Boston, New York City, and Washington, D.C.) in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or "The Nation's Report Card," Chicago fourth and eighth graders ranked, with only one exception, in the bottom half of all districts in math, reading, and science in 2003, 2005 and 2007. In addition, from 2004 to 2008, the Chicago Public Schools district

failed to make "adequate yearly progress" as mandated by the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind Act.

Public education is not meant to be a win-lose, us-versus-them system, nor is it meant to be a recruitment system for the military -- and yet this, it seems, is at the heart of Duncan's legacy in Chicago, and so a reasonable indication of the kind of "reform" he's likely to bring to the country as education secretary.

byline: *Andy Kroll is a writer based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and a student at the University of Michigan.*

http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175022/andy_kroll_will_public_education_be_militarized

for more on the **Military-Corporate Bias** in Chicago-area schools under Duncan, please see:

The Chicago Model & Obama and Duncan's Education Policy: Like Bush's, Only Worse
By Danny Weil

<http://www.counterpunch.com/weil08242009.html>

TPF editorial: The counter-recruitment task force of the Tulsa Peace Fellowship certainly bemoans the fact that, under an Obama administration, save effective organized opposition, the so-called "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation is not being repealed, as an error in policy direction committed under the Bush regime. The Orwellian newspeak of this legislation's name and the privileges it grants to military recruiters preying upon students during school hours betray the true intention of the federal education department: to keep the **poverty draft** in place, by denying a proper education to Blacks and Hispanics living in poorer neighborhoods.

from the archives

Lyrics to "Feel Like I'm Fixing To Die" by Country Joe McDonald

--standing ovation at Woodstock, on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBdeCxJmcAo>

"Feel Like I'm Fixing To Die"
by Country Joe McDonald

Come on all of you big strong men
Uncle Sam needs your help again
he's got himself in a terrible jam
way down yonder in Viet Nam so
put down your books and pick up a gun we're
gonna have a whole lotta fun

And it's one, two, three, what are we fighting for
don't ask me I don't give a damn, next stop is Viet Nam
And it's five, six, seven, open up the pearly gates
ain't no time to wonder why, whoopee we're all gonna die

Come on wall street don't be slow
why man this war is a go-go
there's plenty good money to be made by
supplying the army with the tools of its trade
let's hope and pray that if they drop the bomb,
they drop it on the Viet Cong

Come on generals, let's move fast
your big chance has come at last
now you can go out and get those reds
cos the only good commie is the one that's dead and
you know that peace can only be won when we've
blown 'em all to kingdom come

Come on mothers throughout the land
pack your boys off to Viet Nam
come on fathers don't hesitate
send your sons off before it's too late
and you can be the first ones on your block
to have your boy come home in a box

The Tulsa Peace Fellowship's Counter-Recruitment Update/Digest, for Sept 2009
page two

The Hell of War Comes Home: Newspaper Series Documents Murder, Suicide, Kidnappings by Iraq Vets

A startling two-part series published in the *Gazette* newspaper of Colorado Springs titled “Casualties of War” examines a part of war seldom discussed by the media or government officials: the difficulty of returning to civilian life after being trained to be a killer. The story focuses on a single battalion based at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment. Soldiers from the brigade have have been involved in brawls, beatings, rapes, drunk driving, drug deals, domestic violence, shootings, stabbings, kidnapping and suicides. The Army unit’s murder rate is 114 times the rate for Colorado Springs.

--*Democracy Now!* does an interview with the reporter who broke the story and gets the Army’s response to the **list of atrocities** laid out by Dave Philips, in his articles.

excerpt from the rush transcript:

DAVE PHILIPPS: When I first started this story, one of the things that the Army told me is, well, a lot of these guys had criminal records before. From my research, what I found was that Kenneth Eastridge was the only person who had a criminal background. When he was twelve years old, he and a friend were playing with his father’s antique shotgun, and he accidentally shot his friend in the chest and

killed him. He pleaded guilty, was sentenced to counseling. And since then, his mother said his record had been clean. He had to get a special waiver to get into the Army, which he found after calling twelve different recruiters. One finally let him in. And for the first two years of his Army career, he was a good soldier. He was decorated with good conduct and achievement medals. There's no record that I found of any discipline problems.

When he came back from his first tour in Iraq, he started abusing drugs and alcohol. He told me he had had nightmares and paranoia. Like almost every soldier that I talked to, he always carried a loaded pistol with him everywhere he went. And he picked up a domestic violence felony charge for getting in a fight with his girlfriend and putting a gun in her face. Now, he was awaiting trial for that charge, when the Army sent him back to Iraq for a second time. He wanted to go. He voluntarily skipped out on his charge. But the Army has rules. They have to go through a checklist before they deploy all soldiers, and one of the things they must check off is whether they have any pending civilian felonies. If so, they can't go. Someone, and I'm not sure who, checked that box and sent him anyway.

Now, all the things that he was doing—abusing drugs, anger issues, paranoia—were signs of PTSD. He probably should have gotten treatment. Instead, he got more combat exposure. They went to an absolutely terrible neighborhood of Baghdad called Al Dora, where his battalion at one point was losing a soldier a day to either the morgue or the hospital. And there he started to lose it, as he—that's how he termed it.

After [he got officially disciplined twice], he went on one more combat mission, where he was sitting in the large machine gun on top of a Humvee, guarding the street while his lieutenant and some other soldiers went to check out a building around the corner. Kenneth Eastridge told me that he just started shooting for no reason. It was a nice day on a civilian neighborhood street, and there were lots of people out and about, just barbecuing, playing soccer, things like that. When he started shooting, everybody rushed to their cars and tried to speed away, because they wanted to get away from the fire. He said there was a vehicle driving ban on, and so as soon as people got in their cars, he started panicking, because all he could think about is car bombs, and he started shooting cars left and right. He told me, over about thirty minutes, he shot something like 1,700 rounds from this large machine gun. I asked him how many people he thought he killed. He said, "Not that many. Maybe twelve." He was court-martialed a short time later, but not for killing all those civilians. He was court-martialed for possession of drugs and disobeying orders.

Once he was court-martialed, the Army decided that he was no longer fit to be in Iraq, so they sent him back to Colorado Springs, where they kicked him out of the Army. So, essentially, they put this guy who they had trained to be a killer and who had obvious mental health problems back on the streets of Colorado Springs. And actually, right before they kicked him out, they had diagnosed him with PTSD, paranoia, severe depression and antisocial personality disorder. But they didn't treat him. They just sent him free.

AMY GOODMAN: And so, Kenneth Eastridge ends up—infantry specialist—now serving ten years in jail for accessory to murder, not for what happened in Iraq, but for the death of a man here in the United States. He said his kill rate in Iraq, is the number he killed, was eighty, and that was confirmed by his sergeant.

http://www.democracynow.org/2009/7/30/the_hell_of_war_comes_home

TPF editorial comment: Why didn't the Army court martial Kenneth Eastridge for the 80 murders he

committed of Iraqi civilians?

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

Army arrests local civilian after bizarre mixup

By Ray Lane
KOMOnews

SEATTLE - A local man returning from a trip to Central America was dumbfounded when military officials had him arrested for being a deserter - even though he was never in the military.

"To one day just be arrested, and like - here you go, you're detained, and not have any idea why ..." says Chris Parks of Seattle, his voice trailing off.

For Parks, 27, the incredible headache began a few weeks ago as he and some friends were coming back to the United States after a trip to Mexico and Central America.

As he went through customs at the Charlotte airport in North Carolina, his name caught the attention of Homeland Security personnel.

Parks' name was flagged as being a deserter from the military.

"I've been in the Army for 10 years, and didn't even know it," he says. "Just seems kind of odd."

He was tossed into the county jail in Charlotte and locked up for one week. When told he was a fugitive, he was floored.

Parks was then ordered to report to Fort Knox in Kentucky - where he sat and waited and waited some more with actual military deserters.

His head was shaved, he was issued fatigues. He was afraid he would be court-martialed.

"I was at Fort Knox for one week - and I almost didn't get out," says Parks.

Parks says when he was 18, he nearly joined the Army. But at the last minute, he backed out.

Apparently, that message never got through military's system.

"How paperwork could have gotten messed up enough to say that I was actually in the military and made it there - and it actually says that I was in there for two years before they finally figured out that I wasn't - and started counting me as a deserter," says Parks.

Army records showed that Parks had gone through basic training in South Carolina, then went AWOL from a base in Georgia.

He insists that never happened, and wonders if his military recruiter from 10 years ago hung him out to

dry by never processing his paperwork to "de-enlist."

Says Parks: "I think it's probably something they don't want a lot of people to know about. And I don't really blame them."

Parks says he now carries documents to prove to authorities he's not a deserter. But he still hasn't received a full explanation from the Army about how this all happened.

He says being detained cost him about \$1,500 - plus lost time at work.

<http://www.komonews.com/news/51747592.html>

Soldier gets month in jail for refusing deployment to Afghanistan

By Angela K. Brown, Associated Press Writer
Aug. 5, 2009

FORT HOOD, Texas — A Fort Hood soldier was sentenced Wednesday to a month in jail for refusing to deploy to Afghanistan over his beliefs that the war violates international law.

Spc. Victor Agosto, 24, of Miami, pleaded guilty to disobeying lawful orders and was sentenced at the central Texas Army post. The judge also reduced his rank to the Army's lowest level, a private, which also was part of the maximum penalty he faced in his plea agreement with the military.

Also, Agosto cannot be discharged at a level lower than other-than-honorable conditions, an administrative discharge. A discharge was not mentioned in the hearing, but Agosto is expected to be released from the Army after completing his jail term.

Before he was sentenced during the hourlong military hearing, he told the judge he should not be jailed because he posed no threat to anyone.

He said he had remained on post and went to work every day since refusing to deploy after learning a few months ago that the Army was keeping him beyond his enlistment date. He said he did not use drugs or go absent without leave, as other soldiers have done to avoid deployment.

"I really had no Army way of being consistent with my conscience," Agosto said. "The courts haven't recognized soldiers' rights to refuse an order they believe to be illegal. ... I believe future courts will find that the Afghanistan war is illegal because it violates international law."

Agosto said that when he enlisted in 2005, he felt invading Iraq was wrong but that troops had a mission to complete. He said he began to oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan after he served a 13-month tour in Iraq, which ended in late 2007.

Wednesday's proceeding was a summary court martial, in which a soldier's guilty finding will not show up as a felony conviction.

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<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/tx/6561589.html>

related story:

Another Soldier Refuses Afghanistan Deployment

Wednesday 12 August 2009

by: Dahr Jamail, [truthout](#) | [report](#)

Sgt. Travis Bishop, who served 14 months in Baghdad with the 3rd Signal Brigade, faces a court-martial this Friday for refusing to deploy to Afghanistan. Bishop is the second soldier from Fort Hood in as many weeks to be tried by the military for his stand against an occupation he believes is "illegal." He insists that it would be unethical for him to deploy to support an occupation he opposes on both moral and legal grounds and he has filed for conscientious objector (CO) status.

<http://www.truthout.org/081209A>

related story:

A contingent of wayward soldiers is holed up in in Echo platoon jail

Fort Bragg, North Carolina, is the site of what amounts to **arbitrary imprisonment, a concentration camp, and a legal black hole**

By Dahr Jamail and Sarah Lazare

Echo Platoon is part of the 82nd Replacement Detachment of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Soldiers in the platoon are relegated to living quarters in a set of dimly lit concrete rooms. Pipes peep out of missing ceiling tiles and a musty smell permeates beds placed on cracked linoleum floors.

For soldiers who have gone AWOL (absent without leave) and then voluntarily turned themselves in or were forcibly returned, the detention conditions here in Echo Platoon only reinforce the inescapability of their situation. They remain suspended in a legal limbo of forced uncertainty that can extend from several months to a year or more, while the military takes its time deciding their fate. Some of them, however, are offered a free pass out of this military half-life - but only if they agree to deploy to Afghanistan or Iraq.

Specialist Kevin McCormick, 21, who was held in Echo Platoon for more than seven months on AWOL and desertion charges, was typically offered release, subject to accepting deployment to Iraq, despite being suicidal. "Echo is like jail," he said, "with some privileges. [You are] just stuck there with horrible living conditions. There's black mold on the building [and] when I first got there, there were five or six people to a room, which is like a cell block with cement brick walls. The piping and electrical [wires] are above the tiles, so if anything leaks or bursts, it goes right down into the room. "

Specialist Michael St Clair went AWOL because he could not obtain treatment from the military for his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). On turning himself in, he ended up consigned to Echo Platoon. As he recalls it, "The number fluctuates all the time, but on an average you have 50 people sharing two functioning toilets and a single shower ... Except for a couple of rooms none have doors, and there is minimal privacy with four or more people to a room. It's stressful not knowing what's going to happen to you."

Former military recruiter Staff Sergeant Jeffrey Nelbach went AWOL in 2004 in hopes of salvaging his family life. (It is not uncommon for soldiers to remain AWOL for years at a time.) Now, he's paying for it with a stint in Echo. He confirms the awful conditions. "It is an old, moldy building with bad ventilation. 50-plus people use the same latrine. And more and more people are going there."

According to Major Virginia McCabe, spokesperson for the 82nd Airborne Division, AWOL soldiers are confined to the holdover section at the 82nd Replacement Detachment at Fort Bragg if they are deemed a flight risk. She offered no criteria, however, for just how that is determined. "Each AWOL soldier has his or her own special circumstances," she said. "They stay in a holding platoon until a legal decision is taken. Or they might say they made a mistake and return to serve."

Echo Platoon, however, seems to be made up of a contingent of wayward soldiers the military does not know what to do with. Captain Kevin Thaxton, commander of the 82nd Replacement Detachment, of which Echo Platoon is a part, offers this explanation:

"While the entire replacement detachment contains 500 soldiers, there are 40 AWOLs in Echo and about 20 in for holdovers/personnel issues and post-UCMJ [Uniform Code of Military Justice] Punishment, totaling about 60 people.

"Some are given the opportunity to go back with their unit and deploy. Those who accept do not exactly have their records cleared, but they do get to start over, keeping in mind we know this person has had problems before. We don't advertise that they went AWOL, but the commanders and the NCOs [non-commissioned officers] know about it. Not many have this opportunity. It depends on how long they've been AWOL."

One soldier in Echo Platoon, Specialist Dustin Stevens, had gone AWOL before the invasion of Iraq, and did so because he was opposed to all wars. On turning himself in, he's been in the holdover section for six months now awaiting AWOL and desertion charges. He may not be halfway through his purgatory. Others in the platoon have been held for more than a year in a no man's land of small-scale arbitrary punishment in which, according to soldiers in Echo Platoon, officers in charge regularly verbally abuse them as well as make physical threats.

Kevin McCormick describes his experience this way: "You're less than human to the commanders. [They act as if] you don't deserve to be alive. A sergeant told us he wanted to take us out and shoot us in the back of the head. We get threatened all the time there."

On being questioned about such threats, Captain Thaxton played it safe. "I can't confirm or deny verbal abuse," he responded. "It depends on if a person is angry after something has been done."

On average, two new soldiers are assigned to Echo Platoon every week, according to Stevens. Resigned to a long wait, Stevens sums up life in the platoon this way:

"I've been here almost seven months, and only a few people have gotten out during that time. There was a Purple Heart veteran who was here and is now serving a 15-month jail sentence. One guy, gone for 10 years, got two years in prison without pay, although he had a newborn daughter. It doesn't make sense. Unfortunately, our sentence does not take into account the time served here. Some of us get paid, albeit the E1 or entry level wages, but I'd gladly give them the money back if I could go home...

"[Soldiers in Echo Platoon] don't ... get the benefits others get. You are pretty much a prisoner. You can't do anything. They say you are not confined, but you can't go more than 50 miles off post. It's almost impossible to get leave unless in dire emergency, so we're just sitting here, day by day."

Like others who have turned against America's wars after multiple deployments to Iraq, Michael St Clair has his regrets:

"When I got over [to Iraq], I was shocked by the brutality. My whole first tour, I can honestly say I never saw an Iraqi guy who deserved to die, who had weapons or was attacking us or anything. In many instances American soldiers took really bad decisions that killed innocent Iraqis. I had a hard time reconciling that with what I had thought I would be doing. By the time my second tour was over, I had morphed into a killer. A lot of people don't understand what war actually is. I don't know what's worse: being charged with felony or having a head full of insanity."

On St Clair's return from his second tour, the military did a post-deployment health assessment, and six months later a re-assessment. That is when his PTSD symptoms began to appear.

Assigned to Echo Platoon in January 2009, Dustin Stevens continues to bide his time awaiting charges that might still be months away. "[It's] horrible here. We are treated like animals. We're all so lost and wanting to go home. Some of us are going crazy, some are sick. And the way I see it, I did nothing wrong. By reading or talking to people all of the time I try to stay out of this place in my mind ... There are people here who should be in mental hospitals."

James Branum, Stevens' civilian lawyer, is also the legal adviser to the GI Rights Hotline of Oklahoma and co-chair of the Military Law Task Force (MLTF), which offers training to the legal community and information about GI Rights and military law to service members and their families. He said AWOL troops make up three-quarters of Echo platoon and that medical cases are the bulk of the remainder. Accustomed to inordinate delays from the military, he said, "People are in this unit for months and months. The [authorities] take forever to do anything. You are going to be there six months if you're lucky, 12 if you're not."

On the legality of such detention without trial, Branum comments:

"I think there are some illegal elements about how they are running the place, but the general concept is not illegal. You have people there with legitimate medical and psychological issues, but instead of proactively helping them, the military shuffles them off to this replacement [detachment] to be treated like dirt. They are told they have no rights when they do have a right to talk to their commander, to have an attorney, and to talk to Congress. Echo, if run properly, would be a good thing. Not so when people are being warehoused and told repeatedly they have no rights. That is illegal."

bylines:

Dahr Jamail, an independent journalist, is the author of *The Will to Resist: Soldiers Who Refuse to Fight in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Haymarket Books, 2009) and *Beyond the Green Zone: Dispatches From an Unembedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq*, (Haymarket Books, 2007). Jamail reported from occupied Iraq for nine months as well as from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Turkey over the last five years. His website is Dahrjamailiraq.com.

Sarah Lazare is the project coordinator for Courage to Resist, an organization that supports troops who refuse to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, and is also a freelance writer.

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http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/KH11Ak05.html

U.S. Apache Helicopter Kills Cucumber Farmers in Afghan Village

file under: increasingly aerial occupation

Source: CBC News

Posted: 08/06/09 9:01AM

Five farmers were killed by an air strike from Western forces, Afghan police said Thursday.

The farmers were loading cucumbers into a taxi in the rural Zhari district near Kandahar city when a military helicopter fired on them, said district police Chief Niaz Mohammad Sarhadi.

Sarhadi alleged the strike was conducted by U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Officials will review footage from the Apache helicopter to determine what happened.

The repeated deaths of innocent civilians at the hands of foreign troops have caused deep resentment among Afghan people. President Hamid Karzai has repeatedly called on foreign troops to halt air strikes and raids in Afghan villages.

<http://news.aol.ca/article/afghan-farmers-killed-by-air-strike-police/689247/>

related story:

US Copter Opens Fire on Afghan Medical Clinic

Injured Taliban 'Sought Treatment,' Leading to Attack

by Jason Ditz, August 27, 2009

US and Afghan forces, backed by a US Apache helicopter attacked a medical clinic in the Paktika Province of Afghanistan yesterday after receiving reports that a wounded Taliban commander had “sought treatment” at the facility.

Attacking a medical clinic, however, particularly when health care is in such short supply in rural

Afghanistan, is likely to fuel resentment among locals. Likewise, the attack on a relatively minor Taliban commander when he was already injured and seeking medical treatment is probably going to raise further suspicions as the Afghan government continues to talk about reconciliation.

<http://news.antiwar.com/2009/08/27/us-copter-opens-fire-on-afghan-medical-clinic/>

file under: What?! There are rules during wartime?

Hillary Clinton suggests US could join war crimes court (ICC) to bring crimes committed by U.S. Soldiers under jurisdiction of International Law

Sec'y State Clinton expresses regret that US hasn't yet joined international war crimes court

AP News

Aug 06, 2009

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says it is a "great regret" that the United States is not a member of the International Criminal Court.

Clinton spoke Thursday in Kenya during a seven-nation tour of Africa.

The court is the first permanent institution authorized to try individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes when national courts are unable or unwilling to do so.

The U.S. formally rejected U.S. participation in May 2002. A main concern was that American servicemen hunting down terrorists abroad might not be safe from politically motivated prosecutions.

Clinton said it is "a great regret but it is a fact that we are not yet a signatory. But we have supported the court and continue to do so."

Source: AP News

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/08/06/clinton-suggests-us-could-join-war-crimes-court-2/>

file under: revisiting past horrors committed by U.S. Army

William Calley, former Army Lt. convicted on 22 counts of murder in the infamous My Lai

Massacre in Vietnam, publicly apologized

By Dick McMichael - Special to the *Ledger-Enquirer*

Aug. 21, 2009

speaking in Columbus.

“There is not a day that goes by that I do not feel remorse for what happened that day in My Lai,” Calley told members of the Kiwanis Club of Greater Columbus on Wednesday. His voice started to break when he added, “I feel remorse for the Vietnamese who were killed, for their families, for the American soldiers involved and their families. I am very sorry.”

In March 1968, U.S. soldiers gunned down hundreds of civilians in the Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai. The Army at first denied, then downplayed the event, saying most of the dead were Vietcong. But in November 1969, journalist Seymour Hersh revealed what really happened and Calley was court martialed and convicted of murder.

When asked if obeying an unlawful order was not itself an unlawful act, he said, “I believe that is true. If you are asking why I did not stand up to them when I was given the orders, I will have to say that I was a second lieutenant getting orders from my commander and I followed them — foolishly, I guess.” Calley then said that was not an excuse; it was just what happened.

The officer Calley said gave those orders was Capt. Ernest Medina, who was also tried for what happened at My Lai. Represented by the renowned Defense Attorney F. Lee Bailey, Medina was acquitted of all charges in 1971.

That same year, Calley didn’t fare as well.

After four months of testimony in a Fort Benning courtroom and almost two weeks of jury deliberation, he was convicted of premeditated murder. After the verdict was read, but before sentencing, Calley was allowed to address the court.

“I’m not going to stand here and plead for my life or my freedom,” Calley said. “If I have committed a crime, the only crime I have committed is in judgment of my values. Apparently I valued my troops’ lives more than I did those of the enemy ...”

Calley was sentenced to life in prison, which was later shortened considerably.

Many at the time considered Calley a scapegoat, forced to take the fall for those above him. That sentiment had been very strong when the late federal Judge J. Robert Elliot released Calley from custody after a habeas corpus hearing. An appeals court reversed Elliot’s ruling and Calley was returned to Army custody, but the Army soon paroled him.

He now lives in Atlanta with his 28-year-old son, Laws. Calley remains stripped of some of his civil rights.

“No, I still cannot vote,” he said. “In fact, I’m not even supposed to go into the post office, I guess.”

<http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/story/813820.html>

file under: sadistic subculture

4 American soldiers in Iraq charged with cruelty, maltreatment of comrades, US military says

Chelsea J Carter, AP News
Aug 21, 2009

Four American soldiers in Iraq have been charged with cruelty and maltreatment of soldiers in their platoon, the U.S. military said Friday.

In a statement, the military identified the men as Sgt. Enoch Chatman , Staff Sgt. Bob Clements, Sgt. Jarrett Taylor and Spc. Daniel Weber of B Troop, 2nd Squadron, 13th Cavalry Regiment from Fort Bliss, Texas. The military did not provide their ages.

Chatman of West Covina, Calif., was charged with four counts of cruelty and maltreatment, one count of making a false statement and one count of reckless endangerment. If convicted on all counts, he faces up to 10 years in prison, a dishonorable discharge and forfeiture of pay, the military said.

Clements of Eastland, Texas, faces four counts of cruelty and maltreatment, three counts of making a false statement, one count of impeding an investigation and one count of reckless endangerment. If convicted on all counts, he faces up to 25 years in prison and a dishonorable discharge, the military said.

Taylor of Edmond, Okla., was charged with two counts of cruelty and maltreatment, one count of making false statement and one count of reckless endangerment. He faces up to eight years in prison, if convicted on all charges.

Weber of Frankenmuth, Mich., has been charged with three counts of cruelty and maltreatment, one count of reckless endangerment and one count of impeding an investigation. The charges together carry a nine year maximum, if convicted.

The statement does not provide any further details nor does it say where the allegations occurred. Multi-National Division-South is headquartered in southern Iraq in the rich city of Basra.

Source: AP News

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/08/21/us-4-american-troops-in-iraq-charged-with-cruelty-2/>

July 15 2009

SWAN Executive Director testifies about sexual assaults committed by U.S. soldiers

Hearing held by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Many women veterans who have already been mistreated by the military are doubly traumatized by harassment or mistreatment at VA facilities. Knowledge about the epidemic of Military Sexual Trauma (MST)—sexual harassment, assault and rape—which has yet to be fully recognized by the armed forces, has also yet to be adequately integrated into the daily operations of VA hospitals and the awarding of VA compensation.

MST screening at hospitals around the nation appears to be inconsistent, at best. A shortage of female physicians and counselors, a rapid turn-over of inexperienced residents, a preponderance of culturally conservative administrative staff, and poorly trained, apathetic and unprofessional medical staff contributes to a lack of understanding about how to treat veterans who suffer from symptoms related to MST.

byline: *SWAN Executive Director, Anuradha K. Bhagwati, has spoken to countless audiences on the challenges faced by women in the military, including Military Sexual Trauma, discrimination in the workplace, and the VA health care and benefits system. Her goal is to establish SWAN as the leading organization devoted to meeting the needs of American servicewomen and veterans, as well as one of the most innovative human rights non-governmental organizations serving women today.*

<http://www.servicewomen.org/>

related story:

3 Bragg soldiers indicted in slayings of 2 female U.S. soldiers

The Associated Press
Aug 27, 2009

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — A North Carolina grand jury has indicted three Fort Bragg soldiers who police had previously charged with killing two female soldiers in separate attacks last year.

The Fayetteville Observer reported Thursday that the first-degree murder indictments were issued after the grand jury heard testimony from Fayetteville police detectives who investigated the slayings.

Sgt. Edgar Patino is accused of killing Spc. Megan Touma of Cold Spring, Ky., who was seven months pregnant when she was found dead in a hotel bathtub. Touma's family said the married Patino was the father of her child.

Sgt. Richard David Smith and Pfc. Matthew Wayne Kvapil were also indicted. They are accused of the plotting the ambush stabbing of Smith's wife, Sgt. Christina Smith.

The Tulsa Peace Fellowship's Counter-Recruitment Update/Digest, for Sept 2009
backpage

Burn Victims: Toxic exposure torments soldiers long after their tours end.

By Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, for *The American Conservative*

Retired Sgt. Michael Maynard can no longer feel his feet. He began to notice the problem four years ago while working as an air-traffic control specialist in the Army. After a year at Camp Taji in Iraq, Maynard took off his boots one night and found that a hot piece of metal had slipped inside—hot enough to tear away his skin. Somehow he hadn't felt it.

By the time another year had passed, Maynard was back home in Indiana, confined to a wheelchair. Today, at age 49, he needs heavy braces to help him stand.

“With his muscles degenerating ... he keeps falling,” his wife Maria says. “He’s a mess. I am constantly worried about him.”

Department of Veterans Affairs doctors were flummoxed by his condition, finally diagnosing rheumatoid fibromyalgia. But Maynard's own neurologist believes his condition is the result of nerve damage caused by toxic exposure.

He is not alone. Michael Maynard is one among thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of veterans suffering from what growing anecdotal and scientific evidence indicates is chronic illness due to inhaling poisonous emissions from the massive burn pits at Army installations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One soldier stationed in Hawaii was told by Army doctors that his cystic lung disease and shrinking abdominal aorta were probably related to his burn-pit exposure at Camp Speicher in Iraq. He is believed to be the first to have the link officially documented.

As of 2008, of the nearly 500,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who had sought healthcare through the Veterans Administration since the war on terror began, 20 percent had respiratory diseases, 36 percent suffered diseases of the nervous system, 17 percent reported circulatory illness, and 42 percent exhibited “symptoms, signs and ill-defined conditions.”

“I was told the pit was safe, but we all joked we would wind up with cancer,” retired U.S. Air Force Sgt. Jon Vance wrote recently in the growing ad hoc registry at the Burn Pits Action Center (www.BurnPits.org). In 2005, he was stationed at Balad Air Base, which at its peak was burning up to 250 tons of waste a day.

“I saw furniture, computers, trucks, etc. being burned. I believe they burned some really nasty stuff in

that pit,” Vance says. He now suffers from “a continuous dry cough along with pain in every joint, headaches, diminished lung capacity, memory loss, and a constant metallic taste in my mouth.”

<http://amconmag.com/article/2009/oct/01/00014/>

VA won't pay benefits to Marine whose injuries came from vaccine

By David Goldstein | McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — It wasn't a bullet or roadside bomb that felled Lance Cpl. Josef Lopez three years ago after nine days in Iraq.

It was an injection into his arm before his unit left the states.

The then 20-year-old Marine from Springfield, Mo., suffered a rare adverse reaction to the smallpox vaccine. While the vaccine isn't mandatory, the military strongly encourages troops to take it.

However, it left Lopez in a coma, unable for a time to breathe on his own and paralyzed for weeks. Now he can walk, but with a limp. He has to wear a urine bag constantly, has short-term memory loss and must swallow 15 pills daily to control leg spasms and other ailments.

And even though his medical problems wouldn't have occurred if he hadn't been deployed, Lopez doesn't qualify for a special government benefit of as much as \$100,000 for troops who suffer traumatic injuries.

The hangup? His injuries were caused by the vaccine.

"I could have easily died, or not been able to walk because of that," Lopez said.

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/washington/story/74566.html>

We Need to End the Secret Shame of Our Empire of Bases

excerpt from a longer article by Chalmers Johnson

31 July 2009

In March, *New York Times* op-ed columnist Bob Herbert noted, "Rape and other forms of sexual assault

against women is the great shame of the U.S. armed forces, and there is no evidence that this ghastly problem, kept out of sight as much as possible, is diminishing." He continued:

"New data released by the Pentagon showed an almost 9 percent increase in the number of sexual assaults — 2,923 — and a 25 percent increase in such assaults reported by women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan [over the past year]. Try to imagine how bizarre it is that women in American uniforms who are enduring all the stresses related to serving in a combat zone have to also worry about defending themselves against rapists wearing the same uniform and lining up in formation right beside them."

The problem is exacerbated by having our troops garrisoned in overseas bases located cheek-by-jowl next to civilian populations and often preying on them like foreign conquerors. For example, sexual violence against women and girls by American GIs has been out of control in Okinawa, Japan's poorest prefecture, ever since it was permanently occupied by our soldiers, Marines, and airmen some 64 years ago.

That island was the scene of the largest anti-American demonstrations since the end of World War II after the 1995 kidnapping, rape, and attempted murder of a 12-year-old schoolgirl by two Marines and a sailor. The problem of rape has been ubiquitous around all of our bases on every continent and has probably contributed as much to our being loathed abroad as the policies of the Bush administration or our economic exploitation of poverty-stricken countries whose raw materials we covet.

The military itself has done next to nothing to protect its own female soldiers or to defend the rights of innocent bystanders forced to live next to our often racially biased and predatory troops. "The military's record of prosecuting rapists is not just lousy, it's atrocious," writes Herbert. In territories occupied by American military forces, the high command and the State Department make strenuous efforts to enact so-called "Status of Forces Agreements" (SOFAs) that will prevent host governments from gaining jurisdiction over our troops who commit crimes overseas. The SOFAs also make it easier for our military to spirit culprits out of a country before they can be apprehended by local authorities.

This issue was well illustrated by the case of an Australian teacher, a long-time resident of Japan, who in April 2002 was raped by a sailor from the aircraft carrier USS *Kitty Hawk*, then based at the big naval base at Yokosuka. She identified her assailant and reported him to both Japanese and U.S. authorities. Instead of his being arrested and effectively prosecuted, the victim herself was harassed and humiliated by the local Japanese police. Meanwhile, the U.S. discharged the suspect from the Navy but allowed him to escape Japanese law by returning him to the U.S., where he lives today.

In the course of trying to obtain justice, the Australian teacher discovered that almost fifty years earlier, in October 1953, the Japanese and American governments signed a secret "understanding" as part of their SOFA in which Japan agreed to waive its jurisdiction if the crime was not of "national importance to Japan." The U.S. argued strenuously for this codicil because it feared that otherwise it would face the likelihood of some 350 servicemen per year being sent to Japanese jails for sex crimes.

Since that time the U.S. has negotiated similar wording in SOFAs with Canada, Ireland, Italy, and Denmark. According to the *Handbook of the Law of Visiting Forces* (2001), the Japanese practice has become the norm for SOFAs throughout the world, with predictable results. In Japan, of 3,184 U.S. military personnel who committed crimes between 2001 and 2008, 83% were not prosecuted. In Iraq, we have just signed a SOFA that bears a strong resemblance to the first postwar one we had with Japan: namely, military personnel and military contractors accused of off-duty crimes will remain in U.S. custody while Iraqis investigate. This is, of course, a perfect opportunity to spirit the culprits out of the country before they can be charged.

Within the military itself, the journalist Dahr Jamail, author of [*Beyond the Green Zone: Dispatches*](#)

[from an Unembedded Journalist in Occupied Iraq](#) (Haymarket Books, 2007), speaks of the "culture of unpunished sexual assaults" and the "shockingly low numbers of courts martial" for rapes and other forms of sexual attacks. Helen Benedict, author of [The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq](#) (Beacon Press, 2009), quotes this figure in a 2009 Pentagon report on military sexual assaults: 90% of the rapes in the military are never reported at all and, when they are, the consequences for the perpetrator are negligible.

It is fair to say that the U.S. military has created a worldwide sexual playground for its personnel and protected them to a large extent from the consequences of their behavior.

byline: *Chalmers Johnson is the author of [Blowback](#) (2000), [The Sorrows of Empire](#) (2004), and [Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic](#) (2006), and editor of *Okinawa: Cold War Island* (1999).*

book review:

Engaging collection of essays, *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts*, by Catherine Lutz (Brown University)

Scholars consider **violence, pollution, resentment bred by U.S. military bases**

review by Paul J. Nyden

August 15, 2009

More than 190,000 soldiers and 115,000 civilian employees inhabit 900 military bases around the world, according to official government statistics. The real numbers, including top-secret facilities, are significantly larger. The Pentagon also outsources work on those bases to private military contractors.

Under the new Obama administration, those bases continue to expand, despite rising criticism of U.S. foreign policy at home and around the world.

U.S. military bases do provide jobs to local people across the planet.

But those bases routinely seize land from native peoples and wreak environmental havoc along beautiful coasts, on islands and in ocean waters.

Hundreds of little communities have lost their farmlands. Military jet fuels and poisonous residues from exploded bombs have damaged local children.

And in many places, local people have been imprisoned and tortured by despotic regimes propped up by U.S. political and military support.

Few academics and news reporters write about the extent of these bases, hiding them from public view.

Catherine Lutz, a Brown University professor, does so in her engaging collection of essays, *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts*.

Local movements challenging U.S. military bases - such as those in Okinawa, Hawaii, Turkey, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Diego Garcia - are growing, especially among women, sometimes the target of sexual abuses.

Most of our bases are not temporary outposts set up to fight a particular conflict, but part of an enduring U.S. effort to dominate the world.

American ambitions for global domination expanded dramatically in three different eras - in 1898 after the Spanish-American War, in 1945 after World War II and in 2001 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"The bases bristle with weapons whose worth is measured in the trillions and whose killing power could wipe out all life on earth several times over," Lutz recently wrote in "The New Statesman."

Major U.S. missile defense systems are located in countries including Greenland, Poland, the Czech Republic, Israel, Korea and Japan.

But since 1990, some U.S. bases have been forced to close down in some areas, including the Philippines, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Vieques and Uzbekistan.

<http://wvgazette.com/Entertainment/Books/200908150252>

epitaph for this edition of "Truth in Recruiting"

The final surviving British World War I veteran is laid to rest, age 111

--A song fashioned from Mr. Patch's own words about the fighting in the trenches

--recorded by the pop group Radiohead - Harry Patch (In Memory of) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vztj_TnUQyY

"I am the only one that got through
The others died where ever they fell
It was an ambush
They came up from all sides
Give your leaders each a gun and then let them fight it out themselves
I've seen devils coming up from the ground
I've seen hell upon this earth
The next world war will be chemical but they will never learn."

War, Patch said once, was "the calculated and condoned slaughter of human beings," too often sent into combat as "cannon fodder" by politicians who should have settled their conflicts by dueling among themselves. "Too many died," he said. "War isn't worth one life." As for the carnage on the Western Front, on both sides, he said all who fought, whether British or German, should be mourned. "Irrespective of the uniforms we wore," he told the BBC, "we were all victims."

More context:

Thousands Mourn Britain's Oldest Warrior

By John F. Burns

Published: August 6, 2009

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/07/world/europe/07funeral.html?
_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/07/world/europe/07funeral.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss&pagewanted=all)

Tulsa Peace Fellowship's counter-recruitment update/digest for Sept 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@yahooogroups.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)** representing some 188 counter-recruitment groups in cities and towns across the country.

On the web: [http://www.nnomy.org/joomla/index.php?
option=com_content&task=view&id=216&Itemid=91](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, progressives, 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, Sept 10th 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, the Tulsa Interfaith Alliance, Pax Christi, and the Quakers.

--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: 692 subscribers

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further information

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Strength Through Peace: Out of Iraq & Afghanistan

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>