



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

VOL 27, ISSUE 25

AUGUST
2010

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

ARMY REPORTS RECORD NUMBER OF SUICIDES FOR MONTH OF JUNE

By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

Soldiers killed themselves at the rate of one per day in June, making it the worst month on record for Army suicides, the service said Thursday. There were 32 confirmed or suspected suicides among soldiers in June, including 21 among active-duty troops and 11 among National Guard or Reserve forces, according to Army statistics.

Seven soldiers killed themselves while in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan in June, according to the statistics. Of the total suicides, 22 soldiers had been in combat, including 10 who had deployed two to four times.

“The hypothesis is the same that many have heard me say before: continued stress on the force, said Army Col. Christopher Philbrick, director of the Army Suicide Prevention Task Force. He pointed out that the Army has been fighting for nine years in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Last year was the Army’s worst for suicides with 244 confirmed or suspected cases.

The increase was a setback for the service, which has been pushing troops to seek counseling. Through May of this year, the Army had seen a decline in suicides among active-duty soldiers this year compared with the same period in 2009.

Philbrick expressed frustration over the June deaths. “Because we believe that the programs, policies, procedures ... are having a positive impact across the entire force. The help is there.”

A leading military suicide researcher says changing a culture that views psychological illness as a weakness takes time.

“I would expect it to be years,” said David Rudd, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Science at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

The mounting stress on an Army facing renewed deployments and combat in Afghanistan is also a factor, Rudd said. “That’s not a challenge they (Army leaders) control. It’s a challenge that the president and Congress controls,” he said.

The Army also unveiled on Thursday a training video designed to combat suicides. It contains testimonials by soldiers who struggled with self-destructive impulses before seeking help. It is titled *Shoulder to Shoulder: I Will Never Quit on Life*.

Philbrick said this was an improved video that he hoped would reach troubled soldiers. The previous video did not resonate with average soldiers, he said. During a showing in Baghdad, soldiers laughed at it, Philbrick said. “In grunt language, it sucked,” he said.

The Army’s current suicide rate is about 22 deaths per 100,000, which is above a civilian rate that has been adjusted to match the demographics of the Army. That rate is 18-per-100,000. Only the Marine Corps has a higher suicide rate, at 24-per-100,000. Although Marine Corps suicides had been tracking similarly to last year’s record pace, the service reported only one suicide in June.

Just among Guard and Reserve soldiers, suicides have occurred at a higher rate this year than last year, according to Army figures. There have been 65 confirmed or suspected cases this year, compared with 42 for the same period last year.

Submitted by Jim Sorter



Three Thousand Deaths

By Bob Potter
Arlington West, Santa Barbara

Exactly three thousand white crosses
Symmetrically fixed in rows of forty-eight
Aligned at attention across a sandy beach
Vastly understate the reality.

Fleeting symbols of a Sunday afternoon,
Garnished with California seagulls, and a soft breeze
Coaxing tiny sailboats from the yacht harbor,
They shine in the sunlight, astonishing the tourists.

Bypassers from LA and the Valley, gawking New Yorkers,
Aussies and Londoners, Dutchmen and Turks,
Gabblers in Farsi, Japanese, Hindi
And all varieties of Spanish pause to contemplate
The irresistible photo opportunity of Death.

As the digital cameras whiz, zip and flash,
Catching the poignant sight, disposing of its brief shock,
Children wonder if there are bodies in the sand,
Then, reassured and disappointed, are led off for an ice cream.

If there were three thousand deaths here
Instead of these chaste memorial place markers,
Three thousand rotted blood-soaked dismembered corpses
Of former American boys and girls from the small towns and
barrios,

The squandered assets of bemedaled Generals
Riddled with bullets, blown to pieces, mouths agape,
Strewn chaotically, catastrophically across an invasion beach
Of reality, crashed in our midst in a terrible tsunami
Flooding the beaches and the streets, dashed
Across our suburban lawns, stinking up the schoolyards,
Polluting the supermarkets, poisoning the churches,
Assaulting our ears, offending our nostrils, raping our eyes
With an obscene actuality not seen on TV -
This atrocity dutifully unleashed on our orders - well then,
Something would have to be done about it.

But as it is, the crosses and the grizzled veterans
Who tend them like a flowered garden of regret
Are the matter of a brief moment
For onlookers with other destinations,
And the ignorant carnage grinds on,
Eleven time zones away, receding
Into the forgetful future of a careless empire.

Submitted by Richard Gilchrist

Dear VFP er's and Supporters of True Health Care Reform in California

By Carolyn Goldammer

I am writing this to you, as a request for help. As someone who shares a commitment to the ideal that health care is a basic human right, you may be aware of our efforts in our community to make this dream a reality. We know that you may not have time to attend HHCA meetings or help at events. What we need at this time, and would very much appreciate, is for you to mark your calendars for our upcoming events and, if possible, consider making a monetary donation that would help with the pre-planning expenses that are inherent in our upcoming efforts. Many of our WILPF group are involved in these efforts.

Our group will be hosting four events in the coming months. These events are:

August 27th, In association with the Humboldt Folklife Society, a Barn Dance, Arcata Veterans' Hall, 7-10, with HCA selling beer and snacks for the event as a fundraiser.

September 23rd, Mad As Hell Docs at the HSU quad at lunch-time

September 23, 5:30-9:00 The Kick off for the "Mad as Hell Docs"

Tour of California at the Bayside Grange, including a community dinner of soup and salad The Mad as Hell Doctors are an outspoken and very entertaining group of physicians from Oregon who work in partnership with Health Care for All California, the California Nurses Association, California One Care, PDA and many other organizations to advocate for single-payer and increased health care for all. Last summer they drove cross country rallying support for true health reform We anticipate an evening of good fun, lively discussion and educational entertainment. The MAHD would like you to join them for a get acquainted chew and chat session at the community dinner preceding their presentation. The event will include a panel discussion with members of the MAHD as well as local health care providers Dr. Hal Grotke, Dr. Ann Lindsay and Dr. Ellen Mahoney. You can find out more about the MAHD at www.madashelldoctors.com. The event is "pay-if-you-can" open to our community, with a sliding scale donation request of \$5-10 for the dinner.

October 7th, Panel Forum on the California Budget and Economy and how it is /could be impacted by health care reform, 6-9 (approximate time), Eureka Women's Club

Because our goal is to educate about what true health reform looks like, and thereby grow a grassroots movement, we are not charging for the events. Our hope is that profits from the Barn Dance and the community dinner donations, plus donations from attendees will cover all our expenses. However we need up-front monies for securing our facilities and permits.

Our expenses include: facility rentals for the Bayside Grange and Women's Club of \$200 and \$113 respectively; purchasing single

....continued on page 3



Reflections on the 4th of July Information Booth

By Mashaw McGinnis

Another 4th of July has come and gone for our chapter and consequently, so has another booth at the fair. This year it was an easy decision to forego the food booth idea, because we simply lack the human power required to pull off something that labor intensive. But we all agreed that an information booth was important, so when Sunday morning came, several of us drug ourselves out of bed and met down on the plaza to put one together.

It seems funny that members are often reluctant to volunteer for things, but when the event comes, it ends up being a good excuse for old friends to come together and have fun. Gordy showed up with a van full of booth-building items, and his usual cheerful disposition. Carl brought his friend Dan, who is a VFP member from another chapter, allowing him to see what a crazy bunch we are. In order to weigh down pamphlets in the windy booth, Steve Stammes broke bricks with his bare hands to the awe of other members. Possibly not the best way to promote a peaceful image, but extreme circumstances called for it.

Information by itself is not “sexy” except maybe to Bill Gates, and to stand out from all the other booths bursting with color, music and mouth watering smells, we had to resort to a fool proof gimmick. Homemade peanut butter cookies showed up with a sign in big letters, “FREE”. Since there was no on-site food prep or selling involved, there was no complicated paperwork and it worked like a charm. Not to say thousands of people were knocking each other down to get to the cookies, but it did bring people over who would have otherwise just walked by.

Several members had an opportunity to talk one-on-one with individuals throughout the day, about our activities and accomplishments. Many people got to see that we are not against enlisted personnel, but against war.

A young man approached us who said he was considering enlistment, specifically to get training in the medical field which might lead to a career after discharge. As luck would have it, Peter Aronson was working that shift and was able to have a conversation with him about his own experience as an Army medic. Peter felt that the young man was sincere, and spoke of “bettering himself” by joining the military. Afterwards, Peter said his interpretation was that the young man sought to better himself in the eyes of people he respected. Peter noted that he expressed a standard that, by enlisting, he would be recognized as “getting it together”. He seemed to want to demonstrate to others, and himself, that he could commit to a direction. This seems to be a common thread of motivation in young adults who enlist. This particular young man said he was ‘getting older’ and had no real direction. Peter thought he felt he was disappointing his people, and this was a solution.

The young man did take a resource guide, and looked over the list of our chapter’s accomplishments posted at the booth. Even if he forgot everything else, Peter gave him two crucial pieces of information which we should all tuck away in our memory banks for future conversations with young people:

- 1) The service contract states that the service may be extended until 6 months after war ends, and
- 2) The only promise government makes with the enlisted person is in that contract - not anything their recruiters may have promised.

Even if we can only get these points across, it may make the difference in saving someone’s life.

Reflecting on the annual event, it is clear that not every booth we host has to make money or even attract hundreds of people. With veteran suicide at an all time high, our peaceful presence and candid answers over a simple plate of cookies may make the difference in one young person’s decision about enlistment, and save them from going off to war. If that’s the case, then it’s money and time well spent.

Dear VFP’ers: continued from page 2

event insurance which is about \$200 per event (now including barn dances) (\$600); \$25 for a beer permit for the barn dance & possibly for a wine permit for the community dinner. Most of our food will be donated by local farms and will be prepared by our group.

We would very much appreciate your presence and support in putting on these events. All donations collected will go towards facility rental fees, permits, and food. Checks can be made to Humboldt Health Care for All Fund-raising, and sent to HHCA C/o Molly Jacobs-chairwoman, 101 Hill St, Arcata, CA 95521. We will be happy to send you a receipt for any donation and a complimentary ticket for the community dinner. If you have any questions please feel free to call Margy 822-6508 or Carilyn 826-1143.

**Next VFP56 meeting will
be held on Thursday,
August 5th at 7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held in the
Commons Room at 550
Union Street in Arcata.**



FOURTH OF JULY



VFP 56 BOOTH



JUNE THOMPSON PUBLISHES MISSOURI MANDALA

June Thompson, one of the founding members of local VFP56, recently had her book *Missouri Mandala* published.

On a visit to her native state in 1996 to attend a Veterans for Peace National Convention, June along with her husband Bill, toured the southern half of Missouri.

She reports, in her book, on the people and events that inspired her to become an anti-nuclear activist. At several nuclear sites across the country, she was frequently incarcerated, gaining perspective on what is actually happening in this country.

With humor and a keen eye, she engages the reader with her experiences. Extensive resources and a book list guide readers to explore on their own.

June's book allows us a keen insight into her personality and gives vivid details on what it means to stand up for personal principals and beliefs.

Copies of June's book may be obtained on Amazon Books,
<http://www.amazon.com>.

This Was All Secret?

Monday 26 July 2010

By: Eugene Robinson, Op-Ed

Washington - The tens of thousands of classified military documents posted on the Internet Sunday confirm what critics of the war in Afghanistan already knew or suspected: We are wading deeper into a long-running, morally ambiguous conflict that has virtually no chance of ending well.

The Obama administration, our NATO allies and the Afghan government responded to the documents -- made public by a gadfly organization known as Wikileaks -- by saying they tell us nothing new. Which is the problem.

We already had plenty of evidence that elements within Pakistan's intelligence services were giving support and guidance to the Taliban insurgency inside Afghanistan, even though Pakistan

is supposed to be our ally in the fight against the terrorists. The newly released documents don't provide conclusive proof, but they do give a sense of how voluminous the evidence is. "American soldiers on the ground are inundated with accounts of a network of Pakistani assets and collaborators," according to The New York Times, one of three news organizations -- along with the Guardian and Der Spiegel -- with which Wikileaks shared the documents in advance.

We already knew that U.S. and other coalition forces were inflicting civilian casualties that had the effect of enraging local villagers and often driving them into the enemy camp. The documents merely reveal episodes that were previously unpublicized -- an October 2008 incident in which French troops opened fire on a bus near Kabul and wounded eight children, for example, and a tragedy two months later when a U.S. squad riddled another bus with gunfire, killing four passengers and wounding 11 others.

We knew that U.S. and allied special forces units were authorized to assassinate senior Taliban or al-Qaeda figures. The leaked documents sketch the activities of the secret "kill or capture" unit named Task Force 373 -- and in the process, according to the Guardian, "raise fundamental questions about the legality of the killings ... and also pragmatically about the impact of a tactic which is inherently likely to kill, injure and alienate the innocent bystanders whose support the coalition craves."

The Guardian highlights a 2007 incident in which Task Force 373, operating in a valley near Jalalabad, set out to apprehend or kill a Taliban commander named Qarl Ur-Rahman. As the commandos neared the target, someone pointed a flashlight at them; they called for air support, and an AC-130 gunship strafed the area. Later, they discovered that they had killed seven Afghan National Police officers and wounded four others.

A few days later, according to the documents, a Task Force 373 unit fired rockets into a village where they believed a foreign jihadist fighter from Libya was hiding. They killed six Taliban fighters - but also seven civilians, all of them children. One was alive when allied medics arrived. "The Med TM immediately cleared debris from the mouth and performed CPR," the incident report states, but after 20 minutes the child died.

We knew that the Afghan government was spectacularly corrupt. The documents let us glimpse a bit of that corruption -- how commonplace it is and how it destroys public trust.

The documents do tell us some things that we didn't know -- for example, that the Taliban apparently used a heat-seeking missile to shoot down a coalition helicopter in 2007, at a time when U.S. officials were pooh-poohing the threat to allied aircraft from insurgent forces. Underestimating the enemy is rarely a good idea.

And the "Afghan War Diary," as Wikileaks calls the documents, brings into clear focus the Catch-22 absurdity of trying to wage counterinsurgency warfare in a nation with a 2,000-year tradition of implacable resistance to foreign invaders. As the White House



was quick to point out, the documents cover the period before President Obama ordered an escalation and a change of strategy. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, Obama's chosen commander, tried his best to limit civilian casualties -- but soldiers complained, with some justification, that they were not being allowed to fully engage and pursue the enemy. Gen. David Petraeus, put in charge after McChrystal's dismissal, is under pressure from the ranks to relax the rules of engagement -- which would surely lead to more civilians killed, and more grieving relatives transformed into Taliban sympathizers.

Overall, though, the most shocking thing about the "War Diary" may be that they fail to shock. The documents illustrate how futile -- and tragically wasteful -- it is to send more young men and women to fight and die in Afghanistan.

But we knew this, didn't we?

Submitted by Jim Sorter

WIKILEAKS REVELATIONS WILL SPARK MASSIVE RESISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN WAR

By Veterans For Peace President Mike Ferner

Today the war in Afghanistan begins to crumble under the weight of government lies at home and criminal behavior on the battlefield.

Since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan nine years ago, Veterans For Peace has been waiting for the day when internal documents would reveal what we have known all along -- this war is illegal, immoral and we must add, it is bankrupting our nation at a time when millions of Americans have been thrown out of work and thrown out of their homes.

Neither Wikileaks nor the soldier or soldiers who divulged the documents should be prosecuted for revealing this information. We should give them a medal.

Now that the rotten truth of the war has been dug out of government vaults and brought to light - the murder of civilians, the inexcusable deaths and injuries of our troops, the knife to the heart of every soldier's family member, the fact that "winning" in Afghanistan is meaningless, the outrage of our jobless and homeless as trillions are spent on war and bank bailouts - the most important question is, "what will we do about it?"

We can be sidetracked by watching the 24-hour news cycle regurgitate Obama administration denials and "expert" opinions. Or every single one of us can look in the mirror tomorrow morning and see the person responsible for bringing this war to an end. It really is as simple as that. We know this war is wrong. Now we have official proof. When will we do something?

If we have complained, we must write a letter. If we've written a letter, we must get into the streets. If we've marched in the

streets we must sit down in them. If we've been to our representatives' district offices, we must return and not leave until they stop funding the war. If we've talked to our co-workers we must call in sick, slow down production, urge our union to call a strike.

Government can only function with the consent of the governed. We must withdraw our consent at every opportunity until this war is ended, the troops are brought home and we start to rebuild our nation. That is our responsibility and our mission.

As of today, no American can say, "I didn't know what was happening." Now each and every citizen knows. Now we must act like citizens and stop this war.

Bring Them Home Now

- * U.S. Military Deaths
(Afghanistan) 1143**
- * U.S. Military Wounded
(Afghanistan) 6773**
- * U.S. Military Deaths
(Iraq) 4413**
- * U.S. Military Wounded
(Iraq) 31888**
- * Excess Iraqi Deaths
655000**





Veterans For Peace
Chapter 56

Phone 707-826-7124
Email: VFP56@aol.com
WE'RE ON THE WEB:
<http://www.vfp56.org>

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Rob Hepburn, Steve Stammes
Steve Sottong, Jim Sorter
John Schaefer, John Mulloy

EDITOR OF FOGHORN

James Sorter

STANDING COMMITTEES

DU/WMD: Peter Aronson
General Store: Doug Smith
FEM: Dave Berman,
Mashaw McGuinnis
VEOP: Carl Stancil, Jon Reisdorf
VSC: Ernie Behm, John Mulloy

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldncer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.

LANTERN CEREMONY

By Jon Reisdorf

This year, Saturday, August 14 the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and the city of Arcata will sponsor the lantern ceremony remembering the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As in past years there will be lantern-making in the plaza during the Farmers Market. Shiho, a member of the Japanese American community in Eureka, will explain the meaning of the lantern - messages of love and peace to those who are dear to us—which is a meaning we are folding into our own ceremony. We might be able to offer instruction in crane-folding too. Volunteers are needed to help with the making of lanterns. No experience necessary.

In the evening at Klopp Lake there will be a formal ceremony and the launching of the lanterns. The McKinleyville Community Choir will sing 3 songs of peace. The Raging Granies will also perform. Father Eric Freed will speak, and read haiku--written by a woman who endured the bombing in Hiroshima--that he has translated. Ann Anderson, an Arcata High student, will sing a Japanese song as people prepare to launch their lanterns. We will need volunteers with kayaks to retrieve the lanterns after the ceremony. Any help there will also be appreciated. To volunteer contact VFP member Jon Reisdorf at jonreisdorf@hotmail.com.

Veterans For Peace
Chapter 56
P.O. Box 532
Bayside, CA
95524