



VETERANS FOR PEACE
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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT

By Robert C. Koehler

Once again, the curtain of secrecy is drawn back and Olympus looks more like Oz. The machinations of empire turn out to be banal and ordinary.

In a time of endless war, when democracy is an orchestrated charade and citizen engagement is less welcome in the corridors of power than it has ever been, when the traditional checks and balances of government are in unchallenged collusion with one another, when the media act not as watchdogs of democracy but guard dogs of the interests and clichés of the status quo . . . we have WikiLeaks, disrupting the game of national security, ringing its bell, changing the rules.

“Never before in history,” writes Der Spiegel, one of five international publications to get advance copies of more than 250,000 State Department cables dating back to 1966, “has a superpower lost control of such vast amounts of such sensitive information — data that can help paint a picture of the foundation upon which US foreign policy is built.”

The revelations so far seem less significant than the fact that the American government’s bin of secrets has — once again — been raided, and that the raw data of diplomacy has been strewn across cyberspace, for the likes of you and me to ogle and, if we choose, draw our own conclusions. We get to have real-time looks at how geopolitics actually works.

While temporary secrecy, or at least privacy, is sometimes necessary in any endeavor, permanent secrecy — secrecy as entitlement — is nothing but dangerous. Over the last several decades, with an enormous push from the Bush administration, we have devolved toward a secrecy state, with more and more information hidden from American citizens in the spurious name of national security. Meanwhile, the government and the corporotocracy have pursued war and global dominance with impunity.

So Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s claim that WikiLeaks has put lives in danger — the lives of “human rights activists, religious leaders, the critics of governments who speak to members of our embassy about abuses in their own country” — is not only a red herring, in that there is no evidence that anyone has been harmed by any of the hundreds of thousands of classified items about the war on terror that WikiLeaks has liberated so far this year, but sanctimonious damage control, implying that under normal circumstances the U.S. government cares about such lives.

“If it’s loss of life the U.S. government is concerned about, it should begin with paying more attention to the soldiers and civilians it’s putting in harm’s way every hour in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Pierre Tristam writes at FlaglerLive.com.

The sort of data WikiLeaks has outed this time around seems less than shocking, but nonetheless revealing. We now know, for instance, that various tiny nations haggled with U.S. diplomats over the amount of money they would get if they took in a released Guantanamo prisoner; and that American diplomats’ behind-the-scenes assessments of foreign leaders were sometimes blunt and unflattering, unlike the smiling niceties uttered for public consumption in front of the TV cameras.

This is no more than Truth 101, compelling in the way the sheer, raw detail of truth is always compelling.

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Perhaps the biggest revelation of the outed cables so far is what they don't say, as Noam Chomsky discussed a few days ago on "Democracy Now!" What our diplomats aren't talking about, and don't particularly care about, is what ordinary Arabs think, he said, citing a Brookings Institution poll in which 80 percent of Arabs said they regard the U.S. and Israel as major threats, while only 10 percent see Iran as a threat.

"What that reveals is the profound hatred for democracy on the part of our political leadership and the Israeli political leadership," Chomsky said. "These things aren't even to be mentioned. This seeps its way all through the diplomatic service. . . .When they talk about Arabs, they mean the Arab dictators, not the population."

An obsession with secrecy is always anti-democratic; it's an obsession with domination, control and the maintenance of power — and it's a perfectly natural temptation for those in positions of great power. They want to cut their deals in private and present a face of Olympian righteousness in public.

According to the New York Times Lede Blog, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange began a manifesto he wrote four years ago, explaining the purpose of the organization, with a 1912 quote from Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party platform:

"Behind the ostensible government sits enthroned an invisible government, owing no allegiance and acknowledging no responsibility to the people. To destroy this invisible government, to dissolve the unholy alliance between corrupt business and corrupt politics is the first task of the statesmanship of the day."

The invisible government has always been in power. The continuously revolutionary premise of democracy is that power itself — the power to dominate and exert one's will — must not be allowed to coalesce in a single individual or institution, but must be constantly challenged, broken down and redistributed. I fear that most Americans, or at least the media they stay glued to, are content with a charade democracy. That's why WikiLeaks is controversial.

Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist, contributor to One World, Many Peaces and nationally syndicated writer. His new book, Courage Grows Strong at the Wound (Xenos Press) is now available for pre-orders. Contact him at koehlercw@gmail.com or visit his website at commonwonders.com.

Letter to Obama: 'We Demand Our Bonus–Peace'

Posted on December 7, 2010

December 3, 2010

(The following letter was written to President Obama by VFP President Mike Ferner stating the intentions of VFP members to march on the White House if he would not meet with them to discuss the end of aggression and bring our troops home.)

Dear President Obama,

A week ago, I wrote you on this same subject but since I've not yet received a reply either personal or automated, I felt I should try again.

As president of Veterans For Peace (VFP), a national organization of military veterans, I want to convey to you our serious opposition to your administration's policy of ongoing wars, proxy wars, occupations and drone strikes in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine and Yemen.

Your policies are taking innocent lives, causing untold, life-long suffering, rapidly destroying our economy, our environment and ultimately making all of us considerably less safe.

Since there are no logical reasons rooted in human or planetary betterment for these policies, we are left to conclude what is logical and obvious: that their purpose is to maintain and advance what has sadly become the global U.S. Empire.

VFP has voiced our opposition to these wars at every national demonstration and with countless local actions, letters, faxes, emails and phone calls.

We requested a meeting with you shortly after your inauguration, to no avail. We are now requesting another meeting. And since we have tried all the above many times over, this is what we now propose.

If, within 10 days from now, we do not hear a positive response to our request for a meeting, we are prepared to bring a large delegation of our members to Washington before the end of this month. We will come in person to the White House to meet with you or until we are dragged away in full view of our nation and the world—military veterans, carrying their nation's flag, seeking a meeting with their president in the season of Peace.

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

In this season of Peace I remain,
Most sincerely yours,
Mike Ferner, National President
Veterans For Peace
USN Hospital Corps 1969-73

(After waiting for, and hearing no response from President Obama, On December 16th veterans from all over the U.S. did march on the White House. In the freezing rain and snow many bravely stood their ground while police began a systematic arrest and incarceration of those VFP members who "broke the rules" and crossed over the temporary barrier the police has hurriedly erected. What follows is a report from Richard Gilchrist, a member of Chapter 56 who had traveled to Washington DC to take part in the demonstration.)

REPORT FROM WASHINGTON DC DECEMBER 16, 2010

By Richard Gilchrist, VFP Chapter 56

Just a little run down on what happened at the peace demonstration on December 16 in D.C. The Veterans for Peace sponsored the gathering on the sidewalk in front of the White House. Members of other groups as well as several well-known peace workers were in attendance with the VFP members.

I arrived at Lafayette Park across the street from the WH. at about 7:00am. I helped set up equipment for the speakers. At about 8:00am, the snow flurries started, and the snow continued throughout the day. The snow and the cold made the day interesting. The snowfall became heavy as several inches accumulated. Very rapidly those of us with beards soon had ice on our beards. The snow on our shoulders and hats soon made us look like ghosts.

For an hour or better, we heard speeches from several of our comrades. Daniel Ellsberg of the Pentagon Papers fame and March Forward founder Mike Prisoner gave inspiring talks. Ellsberg referenced the Revolutionary War Winter Soldiers. He compared soldiers that stayed the course and fought for the cause when the going was hard to those that gave up and went home when things turned hard. He made the point that we are in for a long fight to stop the wars. The snow

around us made the reference especially poignant. Ellsberg's attendance was very important because he brought out the press. Iraq vet Mike Prisoner gave an uplifting and energy generating speech. Mike was among the first group that went into Iraq. From his experience, he concluded that the war was wrong and immoral. His thoughts are that we must fight (nonviolently) to get our country to stop the wars and use the money for helping our people and others as well.

As usual, the talks went on a little long and we all were looking forward to getting on to our goal, namely making a statement to Obama. By the time the talks were over we were all cold and covered with snow. We formed a single line and to the beat of a drum, we walked very slowly out of the Lafayette Park and made our way across the street to the White House sidewalk and fence. Several VFP flags carried by marchers at the front of the group made it clear that the veterans were coming.

The DC Park Police were out in force. They had out the K9 officers, about twelve horse-patrol teams, a dozen motorcycle officers, and several hundred armed officers. Many of officers were carrying what looked like fancy AK 47's. On top of the White House there were officers watching us through binoculars. I didn't see any snipers but they have been up there during other demonstrations that I have attended.

The police had set up a waist-high fence parallel with the White House black metal fence. The rules of the game were established – those who crossed over the warning fence

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday,
January 6th at 7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held in the Commons
Room at 550 Union Street in Arcata.
Veterans and non-veterans are more than
welcome to join and help us dialogue
about what we together can do to bring
about peace in this complex world



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would be arrested. This is the usual relationship between the protesting groups and the police at the White House. That may seem strange, but you have to remember that neither the police nor the VFP really wanted any one hurt. Most of us were too old to put up much of a fight anyway. We wanted to express through civil resistance our determination to Obama that wars must be stopped. VFP hopes that there will be a steady increase in non-violent resistance across the country.

When I saw the fence, I didn't think I would be able to cross the line. I shouldn't have worried because the fence was soon pushed aside in several places and I easily stepped around it. The police didn't try too hard to prevent us from moving the warning fence. One must remember that the fence was an artificial barrier that on any given day would not be present on this sidewalk, and tourists would be sitting or standing on the iron fence's foundation having their pictures taken.

Once we were behind the warning fence, we lined up along the White House fence. Some very special people joined the veterans: Colleen Rallee, an FBI 911 whistle blower and Chris Hedges, a war correspondent. Many stood on the fence foundation and Elliott Adams chained himself to the tall White House fence. With my crappy knee I didn't try anything fancy because I didn't want to end up on my face. While I was standing, I was given one of the VFP flags to hold. It seems that every time I'm in one of the VFP demonstrations, I end up with a VFP flag.

Finally, after several hours of standing out in the cold and snow, the game continued with the three warnings to leave the area behind the orange fence. The police read the first order. About a half hour later, they repeated the order. Finally after the third reading in another half hour, they said that all behind the orange plastic fence were in violation of disobeying an officer and would be arrested. While the police were doing their thing, our group was singing peace songs and shouting anti-war statements.

After the final order to move, the police set up several tent structures in which to process those who stayed between the orange plastic fence and the black metal fence. They handcuffed our hands behind our backs with plastic ties and moved us to the tents to have our pictures taken. I'm not sure what good the pictures might be because after standing out in the cold and snow for about four hours

we looked like loggers coming out of the bush. They did not finger print us; however, they probably have most of our fingerprints on file.

I don't think the police anticipated the numbers that would be involved in the civil resistance. They didn't have enough buses to carry us to the holding cells. So we stood around until they brought in more transportation. I was finally put in a 'paddy' wagon to be carried to the holding cell. While I was in the wagon, Jim Sorter called me on my cell phone. I was able to slip one of my hands out of the tie and answer the phone. In fact, several of us could remove the handcuffs, but we kept them on because we didn't want the police to make them any tighter. It is very uncomfortable sitting there with your hands cuffed behind the back. We sat there in that truck for an hour. It was worse in the truck than outside because the metal just sucked out our body heat. When we finally got going, we were all betting that the truck would slip off the road. The snow was by then about four inches and not cleared off the roads. A 1/4-inch snowfall in D.C. will normally close down the city. The windshield wipers didn't work so besides being cold as ice icicles, we were all worried about ending up in the Anacostia River.

We finally made it to the Park Police Holding area. There wasn't enough room inside so we were transferred to a bus that had heat. That was a great relief. After about another half hour wait, we were moved into the holding area in a metal garage. That was a return to the cold. The room had a garage door that was open. It felt very cold because of the brief period of blessed warmth.

While in the garage, we were introduced to the Wicked Witch of the West. Up to that point the police officers had acted very correctly and non-aggressively. However, the young lady officer in charge of the holding area could make a Marine or Army DI look like a pansy. She didn't do anything out of order, but she left no doubt that she wasn't playing games. She ordered us to sit down in small groups on the floor. Not only was the floor cold but also try sitting down with your hands behind your back. Once we were all settled she had our handcuffs removed. She then ordered us to remove everything in our pockets and placed in plastic bags. That included our gloves, hats, belts and shoelaces. I'm not sure why we had to remove our shoelaces and belts. Either she thought that we were going to attack her with them or she thought we might try to do ourselves in. We were too cold to do much of anything. Actually, I think it was all part of the game to show that they were in charge.

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In some ways, the crappy weather was our ally. I think the officers wanted to get out of there before conditions got worse, but we still went through the waiting game. I think the game involved making us as uncomfortable as possible. We didn't have any seats, and I was very uncomfortable. After a while, I just said, "The hell with it!" and stood up. Soon every one was on their feet and the police didn't seem to care.

After some delay, they took our names and asked if we were prepared to pay a hundred-dollar fine or come back in 15 days for a court case. I agreed to pay the fine rather than make a return trip to DC. I thought we might have to stay over night, but it seemed to me they wanted to get rid of us as soon as possible. As mentioned, I think that because of the weather conditions, they wanted to get out of there as much as we did. I also don't think they were prepared to hold such a large group or transport us to other facilities. Again, I think the snow was our ally,

After a long time, we paid our fines, picked up our stuff, and were damn near pushed out the door. Walking out the door was a unique experience. You found yourself in the middle of nowhere. The holding facilities are several miles over on the other side of the river from D.C. There isn't any transportation near the holding garage. The VFP had a team at the holding area to check that we got out and that we were ok. I lucked out and got a ride to Union Metro Station where I could eat and catch the Metro to my motel. I had \$5.00 in my shoe and one of the guys loaned me 5 bucks. By 3pm, I was free to think of how cold I had been all day and how cold I had been during Fort Knox basic training; and how sometimes cold, sometimes hot our troops are in Afghanistan and around the world; and I was free to think about the next vigil or the next demonstration.

The night before the event, we met with the VFP organizers and with the legal team. The legal team laid out the possibilities of what could happen when we were arrested. The team wasn't sure how long we would be held. They also said we could be held over night or longer. They didn't know. They said we might be asked to come back in 15 days for a court hearing. No one was sure what was going to happen. So I made up my mind: in for a penny, in for a pound. One day or six months, the price would be worth it if we could in some small way send a message to help bring an end to the killing. What we did was a very small gesture compared with the young black students' actions during the civil rights movement. When I think about what they did and what they endured I become overwhelmed with emotion. I only wish that we could generate the same passion among the populace to force our government to stop killing in our name.

I JUST NEED TO VENT!

By Jim Sorter

Wow!!! A new year already. As they say, where did the old one go? More to the point what did we accomplish during the last 365 days? If you are like me, you might be sitting there shaking your head in amazement at all of the things we as a nation, world and people did not even get close to solving let alone addressing in 2010. Instead so many of us are going into 2011 with Christmas tidings of peace and joy good will towards men still ringing in our ears.

I am tired. Yes, I am tired! But more than that I am discouraged. I could even say I am disgusted and downright angry with politics as usual stripping away rights we once took for granted, the endless war-making machine and the headlong rush to environmental destruction.

Think about it. When is the last time you felt confidence in the people you elected to serve your needs? I don't want to be cynical here, but I cannot think of more than the very few politicians serving our nation at the present time who have, as a serious plank in their program, to get America back on track, to give us hope and inspire us to try harder.

Where are our political heroes like John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Franklin Roosevelt, Martin Luther King who had their eyes on American progress? Granted none of these gentlemen were perfect but they had the courage to act on their convictions. Where can we go now to find men/women of such caliber to even contemplate a career in politics and genuinely want to serve and make things better?

"Yes We Can." Where have we heard that mantra before? Good old Obama had all the hopes of Americans riding on his election, wanting change from the eight years of Bush's incompetence and criminal rein. What has he done to improve the situation? Not only has he not done anything, but has essentially followed, even exceeded most of Bush's doctrines and policies. He continues to buy into the Republican intimidation tactics. Seems he's afraid of upsetting the apple cart. Ya think there are going to be lots of positive accomplishments in 2011 with these two parties taking pot shots at one another?

Democrats and Republicans are at each other's throats over the most inane issues. The party in power is always being handicapped by the party wanting to regain it. We will

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never get anything of any value accomplished with these two groups worrying more about power issues rather than fixing the problems which already plague our nation!!!!

When will we wake up and say enough? Whether people realize it or not, it is not just the disenfranchised citizens of our nation who are losing their rights. Most people are so complacent with their tiny, shrinking piece of the pie not to realize they are getting down to the crumbs. They don't want to acknowledge their American dream is being outsourced to other countries.

Despite protesting, marching, signing, vigiling, writing to congress, talking to our local elected representatives, telephoning, can we name one good action that has come from it?

We march down the streets holding our banners high, while "Joe the Plumber" stands on the sidewalk giving us the one finger salute, yelling obscenities and then goes home, pops the top off of a beer, turns on his 55 inch plasma TV and buries himself in "The Simpsons" or "The Sarah Palin Show", never really thinking about the consequences of inaction.

How do we get our citizens even interested in the terror and madness of these illegal wars? How do we make them aware that this is not a video game? How do we get citizens to care, to get them to seriously begin marching in the streets demonstrating against the unjustness of killing innocent men, women, and children?

Where are the baby boomers of the 60's who protested the Vietnam War until they were finally heard and brought about its end? Where are all of the great protest entertainers who made a mockery of all war and violence. The Bob Dylans, John Lennons, Carol Kings, James Taylors, Peter, Paul & Mary, Pete Seegers and many more giving rise and courage for the young people to go into the streets to protest. Where are our antiwar talented performers now, our university activists?

As we end this season which is suppose to be a time for reflection and new resolutions, I am saddened and cynical enough to see more of the same. I continue to hear Christmas Carols extolling peace on earth, but I wonder to myself, did the people in Darfur have time to celebrate? Did the children of Bangladesh realize Santa had come? Did he bring toys and games to those boys and girls in Iraq and Afghanistan? Or did

they wake up on Christmas day to find a bomb crater in the floor of their home or all of their family killed or maimed. Did they even know that this is that special time of year all about peace and joy? The pessimist in me thinks not!

For sanity's sake I have to stay involved. But over the years we have been trying to effect change in the political climate what have we accomplished? It is the same old game in Washington DC, the same old players ignoring our pleas and protests, and the same old politicians thumbing their noses at us, doing exactly what the lobbyists and corporations want.

America has become a malignancy to other nations. It is an embarrassment for American politicians to try to justify statements they have made against our supposed allies. Wikileaks has opened a gigantic door to America's Fibber McGee's closet. (*Kind of dates me doesn't it!*) Time will reveal other documents just as outrageous as those already exposed.

I have ranted and I have raved. You might be able to tell that I am extremely frustrated with what is happening in our country. Where will we be in twenty years when my grandchildren inherit the supposed dream? I can only hope that more people will rise up off their derrieres and raise their fists against the inequities of our inept politicians and policies.

I will continue to do what I can in my small way to affect change where I can. Hopefully I will find some way to alleviate suffering in my community. I will involve myself in movements for freedom because I cannot help myself. I believe in people. I believe in people. Again, I believe in people! What can I do is but put my heart and energies in projects where I can see the direct results.

2011 is here. What's going to happen this year we don't know. I could probably make some predictions that would be fairly accurate. (1) We will continue to lose more and more of our civil liberties under the Homeland Security Act. (2) Our oceans will be inundated with weapons testing which will severely harm our marine life, oceans and atmosphere. (3) We will see the destruction of our redwood forests just to make room for big box stores to come to Humboldt County and destroy local jobs and economy. (4) The wars will continue in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Pakistan killing innocent men, women and children on a daily basis. (5) Our government will become more and more dysfunctional due to the continuing feud between Republicans and Democrats.

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(6) Our children will continue to suffer budget cuts in education while corporate salaries will rise. (6) The Tea Party will unite with Christian conservatives making a bigger and bigger impact on the dysfunctional state of our union. (7) Conservative talk show hosts like Limbaugh and Beck will continue to stir up the right wing bigots with their vile spewing of lies while couch potato patriots believe every word uttered from their foul mouths. (8) Homelessness will continue to grow while middle class families are thrown out of their homes due to foreclosure increases. (9) Americans will continue to lose jobs to foreign interests while we supplement their fragile economies with billions of dollars of our tax dollars.

I could go on and on with this list. Your list probably would be much longer! I firmly believe that if things keep going down the same path, I can guarantee it will be a year filled with frustration and despair, much like 2010.

Linda says I have to end this tirade. May your new year be filled with meaningful compassion. I hope that I am wrong and we can all look back on 2011 with pride over the great things we have accomplished together as a caring, loving, determined people. As of now hope is all we have left!

Responses welcomed to any and all comments and can, if you wish, be published in the next Foghorn.

DANIEL ELLSBERG URGES PEOPLE TO SUPPORT VFP

www.veteransforpeace.org
December 29, 2010

Most people became aware of me because of the Pentagon Papers. Since then, I have become known as "The Most Dangerous Man In America". And why? Because I spoke the truth. I was convinced that the American public should know the truth about the Vietnam War.

I continue to work to bring the truth to light. On December 16th, in a Veterans For Peace sponsored action, along 131 other people, I was arrested for attempting to chain myself to the White House gate. This was done in protest of American involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I am a proud member of Veterans For Peace. I challenge you to join me and VFP and speak the truth to your family, friends, neighbors, and anyone that will listen. They need to know the truth about how our military is devastating the very countries that we have self-righteously proclaimed to save.

We are destroying Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the same way that we devastated Vietnam. Agent Orange dispersed in Vietnam still lingers in the ground contaminating soil and food. Live bombs and mines continue to harm innocent men, women and children. Today we are leaving depleted uranium weapons scattered throughout Iraq and Afghanistan that will have devastating ecological consequences for both people and ecosystems for years to come.

The True Cost of War is not measured in dollars spent on guns, nor on enemy combatants killed. The True Cost of War is visible in the catatonic face of a PTSD sufferer, in the lifeless body of a veteran who has committed suicide. The cost can be heard in the cries for help of the tortured, the stomach growls of hungry abandoned children on the streets of Iraq and Afghan villages. It can be felt at home in smaller budgets for schools and in homes that seem emptier because a father or mother has been deployed and is away from home during the holidays. The True Cost of War is that it strips us of our humanity, spoils nature's splendor, and ruins people's lives.

I challenge you to join the local VFP Chapters across the country. Become informed and participate in their projects. It is important that we support Bradley Manning and Julian Assange who are being persecuted for telling the truth about the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. When we work together we can make a difference.

I believe that VFP is one of the most credible organizations you can support. We have no alternative but to work for peace.

Daniel Ellsberg

PS Make a gift to ensure that VFP can continue to speak the truth for the next 25 years!

PTSD INFORMATION

Information on PTSD can be obtained through Veterans Administration at (ptsd.va.gov) Another source which you can contact is Military OneSource (militaryone-source.com) at 1-800-342-9647.





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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 turtldnccer@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.

ACUPUNCTURE SCHEDULE And VETERANS SERVICE NEEDS

By John Mulloy

For the foreseeable future, acupuncture treatments will be offered by JESSICA BAKER and/or JEFF HALOFF at 6:00 p.m. prior to each monthly meeting. Ernie Behm and I will have the room set up for them.

It's possible they may bring in some younger vets. We can let these folks know that they are welcome to stay for the meetings. Let us show them our mission is one of peace, that we treat each other with loving kindness.

Camping gear, men's winter clothing, and non-perishable food, drink and condiments, etc are needed.

Bring stuff to our monthly meeting or to my apartment B-7, in same building. If I am not at home leave it at the door.

Submitted by: Jon Mulloy

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