



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

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2012

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

The president of Veterans for Peace, Leah Bolger, talks about her 20-year Navy career, the revelations that transformed her into an anti-war activist, the organization she heads, the corrupt mainstream media and the events leading up to her act of civil disobedience in the U.S. Congress in Part I of this candid interview (31:57).

Retired Navy Commander: End the Wars, Tax the Rich`

• Leah Bolger faced jail time for speaking out in D.C.

By Dave Gahary

On October 26th, 2011, during a hearing of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, or ‘Super Committee,’ the testimony of Douglas Elmendorf, the Director of the Congressional Budget Office was interrupted by 20-year U.S. Navy veteran and Veterans for Peace president Leah Bolger. A resident of Oregon, Bolger was in Washington, D.C. taking part in the Occupy D.C. movement, and took advantage of the chance to attend a hearing while in town. Though she had no plans to disrupt his testimony, Elmendorf, a Zionist-approved puppet promoting more wars for Israel, had spewed enough pro-war propaganda that she felt compelled to act.

Although almost 90-minutes earlier the co-chair of the Committee, Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) had stated, “Let me just remind all our guests that the manifestation of approval or disapproval, including the use of signs or placards, is a violation of the rules which do govern this committee,” Bolger was prepared to break the law to speak for the citizens of this country that Congress had no intention of representing, as was evidenced by poll after poll disapproving of the endless wars and Congress itself.

At 1:27:32 into the hearing, wearing a ‘Greed Kills’ sweatshirt, Bolger stood up, walked forward and straddled the desk Elmendorf was sitting at giving his testimony, addressing him and the congressional panel. Elmendorf kept his head down throughout Bolger’s words, while Murray attempted to restore order. When Murray was unable to stop Bolger’s speech, 22-seconds after she started speaking, the Chair stated, “I would request that the Capitol Police restore order.” After 40-seconds the Capitol Police approached, and less than a minute, 57-seconds, after she began speaking, she was out of the room.

Here is exactly what Bolger said, which can be viewed on C-SPAN:

“Tax the rich and end the wars. That’s how we fix the deficit. And all this obfuscation with percentages of GDP, this is just trying to confuse the issue. The vast majority of the public want you to tax the rich, end the wars. We spend more on war commitments than the rest of the world combined. And this history of this vast, grotesque spending on wars and the war machine has depleted the base of this economy. We would have enough money for housing and healthcare and everything that we want if we stop spending our money in this black hole of the military machine. It’s very obvious. I speak for the 99%. End the wars and tax the rich.”

When news of Bolger’s speech and arrest spread via various websites on the Internet, celebrities such as Ben Cohen co-founder of the ice cream company Ben & Jerry’s, political activist, author, lecturer, and attorney Ralph Nader, and filmmaker, author, social critic and activist Michael Moore spoke out in support of the retired U.S. Navy Commander.

Cohen, who appears on an Internet video of Bolger’s action, makes a plea to “Spread this video far and wide. Tax day is coming up. The 99% pays their fair share. The rich and the corruptions don’t. I support Leah because she’s speaking for the 99%.” Nader, a member of Veterans For Peace, stated, “Bolger showed what active citizens should be doing peacefully, confronting the corruption head on and making sure the public knows what is really going on. She should be honored for her actions.” Michael Moore, using the social media website Twitter, “tweeted” his support of Bolger to his over one million followers.

Bolger was arrested and released and had planned to plead guilty to the charge of Unlawful Conduct — Disruption of Congress at a hearing, to make her point, and appeared before Judge Stuart Nash in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on Thursday, April 12th 2012.

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On April 16, AMERICAN FREE PRESS conducted an exclusive interview with Mrs. Bolger to gain further insight into her act of civil disobedience.

Bolger said in her statement to the Judge, “I have come to understand what millions of Americans already know — that the actual majority will of the people is of little concern to those in power. We can demonstrate and petition and write letters until we are blue in the face, but those actions are virtually worthless, as we can’t compete. Our voice is drowned out by the power of the money coming from the lobbyists and corporate interests. Money equals speech.”

Judge Nash sentenced Bolger to a suspended 60-days incarceration sentence, although the maximum penalty for her charge is six months in jail and/or a \$750 fine. Nash ordered her to perform 20 hours of community service and sentenced her to nine months’ probation. The judge also fined Bolger \$50, but she resisted.

According to a Veterans for Peace press release, “Nash’s imposition of such a minimal sentence was greeted by cheering from the packed courtroom and by multiple offers to pay the \$50 on Leah’s behalf. Bolger does not view the \$50 paid to a victims’ fund as a fine. She asked the court to impose no fine, as she believed no one should pay for permission to speak to our government. Following the hearing Bolger said, ‘I’m gratified that the judge agreed I should pay no fine.’ The judge also imposed no ‘stay-away’ order barring Bolger from Capitol Hill, despite the government’s request for one.”

Bolger “is committed to continuing to speak out and protest, including when NATO comes to Chicago in May,” although she risks of having the 60-day sentence imposed while on probation.

Dave Gahary, a former submariner in the U.S. Navy, is the host of AFP’s “Underground Interview” series.

The Legend of the Spat-Upon Veteran

By David Sirota

Out of all the status-quo-sustaining fables we create out of military history, none are as enduring as Vietnam War myths. Desperate to cobble a pro-war cautionary tale out of a blood-soaked tragedy, we keep reimagining the loss in Southeast Asia not as a policy failure but as the product of an America that dishonored returning troops.

Incessantly echoed by Hollywood and Washington since the concurrent successes of the Rambo and Reagan franchises, this legend was the central theme of President Obama’s Memorial Day speech kicking off the government’s commemoration of the Vietnam conflict.

“You were often blamed for a war you didn’t start, when you

should have been commended for serving your country with valor,” he told veterans. “You came home and sometimes were denigrated, when you should have been celebrated. It was a national shame, a disgrace that should have never happened.”

It’s undeniable that chronic underfunding of the Veterans Administration unduly harmed Vietnam-era soldiers. However, that lamentable failure was not what Obama was referring to. As the president who escalated the Vietnam-esque war in Afghanistan, he was making a larger argument. Deliberately parroting Rambo’s claim about “a quiet war against all the soldiers returning,” he was asserting that America as a whole spat on soldiers when they came home — even though there’s no proof that this happened on any mass scale.

In his exhaustive book entitled “The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam,” Vietnam vet and Holy Cross professor Jerry Lembcke documents veterans who claim they were spat on by antiwar protestors, but he found no physical evidence (photographs, news reports, etc.) that these transgressions actually occurred. His findings are supported by surveys of his fellow Vietnam veterans as they came home.

For instance, Lembcke notes that “a U.S. Senate study, based on data collected in August 1971 by Harris Associates, found that 75 percent of Vietnam-era veterans polled disagreed with the statement, ‘Those people at home who opposed the Vietnam war often blame veterans for our involvement there’” while “94 percent said their reception by people their own age who had not served in the armed forces was friendly.” Meanwhile, the Veterans’ World Project at Southern Illinois University found that many Vietnam vets supported the antiwar protest, with researchers finding almost no veterans “finish(ing) their service in Vietnam believing that what the United States has done there has served to forward our nation’s purposes.”

In the face of such data, why would the current president nonetheless repeat the apocryphal myth about spat-on Vietnam veterans? Because — facts be damned — it serves a purpose: to suppress protest and perpetuate the ideology of militarism.

This objective is achieved through the narrative’s preposterous assumptions.

Metaphorically, if not explicitly, the mythology equates antiwar activism with dishonoring the troops; implies that such protest is kryptonite to the Pentagon’s Superman; and therefore insinuates that America loses wars not when policies are wrong, but when dissent is tolerated.

As political memes go, this 30-year Vietnam storyline has been wildly successful, helping presidents silence opposition to the Iraq War, the continued Afghanistan occupation, our expanding drone wars, and, of course, our ever-increasing defense budgets.



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The Lantern Ceremony

By Jon Reisdorf

After the horrific atomic bombings of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 and three short days later at Nagasaki, the ancient Asian Lantern ceremonies took on a whole new meaning: expressing the hope that nuclear weapons will never be used again. Now every year on or near August 6, those who died in Japan and those killed in past wars are remembered. Each lantern is a symbol of a personal commitment to create peace in this world and hopes for a better future.

The modern Lantern Ceremony began in Vancouver in 1983 soon spreading around the world. The first Lantern Ceremony in Arcata occurred in 1992. This year's ceremony will begin with the making of the lanterns at Arcata Plaza Saturday, August 6 - starting around 10 AM and will continue around 7:30 PM at Klopp Lake at the Marsh. Thanks to all who volunteered. I will be calling later in July about how you can help.

SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS STILL NEEDED: We need volunteers with a kayak or canoe who could help with retrieval of reusable bases after the ceremony is completed. Please email me or call me at 822-4595.



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Photo courtesy of Nate Lomba

**OUR HUMBOLDT WILPF CHAPTER WILL
HAVE OUR ANNUAL BOOK SALE ON JULY
4TH ON
H STREET BETWEEN 10TH & 11TH.**

**WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY BOOK DO-
NATIONS. OUR BOOK SALE SUPPORTS BOOK
PURCHASES FROM THE JANE ADDAMS
PEACE ASSOCIATION WHICH WE DONATE TO
THE LOCAL LIBRARY SYSTEM AS WELL AS
SUPPORTING THE EDILTH ECKART MEMO-
RIAL PEACE SCHOLARSHIP FUND.**

PLEASE CALL CAROL AT 822-5711.

**THANK YOU FOR ANY HELP YOU CAN GIVE,
AND WE HOPE TO SEE YOU ON JULY 4TH.**

**Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, July 5 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 come and
help us dialogue about what we to-
gether can do to bring about peace
in this complex world.**



...Spat Upon Vietnam Soldier: continued from page 2

Yet, as much as the propaganda is cast as a genuflection to veterans, it's anything but. For one thing, it ignores the fact that the many troops enlist specifically to defend our freedoms — among them the freedom to dissent. Additionally, in manufacturing falsehoods out of the painful Vietnam experience, it insults many Vietnam vets by writing their opposition to that war out of history. Unchecked, the mythology ultimately uses the revised history of yesteryear's soldiers to vaporize the very dissent that might prevent tomorrow's soldiers from facing another Vietnam-like quagmire.

That's not respectful or supportive of veterans - it's the opposite.

Submitted by Don Swall

THE PITS OF HELL

By Robert C. Koehler

This week's NATO summit on the future of the war in Afghanistan probably did not get to the matter of burn pits or abandoned latrines.

These are the details of hell. They are also our legacy, in Afghanistan, in Iraq . . . wherever we employ our military to pursue our geopolitical self-interest. Strip away the propaganda, strip away the politics and the pursuit of strategic advantage, and what American/NATO policy amounts to is burned, buried, dumped and abandoned waste, some of it radioactive, most of it toxic.

"My nephew went in the military healthy," wrote a woman named Patsy on the website Burn Pits ActionCenter. This is one story out of hundreds that are now surfacing, about American vets poisoned by American war waste that was discharged into the environment of the countries we occupy with no regard for international law or, my God, sanity.

A month after he got out, she wrote — after three tours to Iraq and Afghanistan — he went on a vacation with his family to Disneyland. He couldn't finish this mission. He had to leave early because he had what turned out to be a "small stroke." This was followed by seizures, trouble breathing, more small strokes, blood clots. He now has stomach cancer and it may have spread.

"He is still fighting to get disability from the military. All this happened within a year of getting out of the military. His marriage is under much strain and falling apart. He can't work. He asked his mom, what do I do with the rest of my life now? He is 34 years old. His mom cried for days. . . .

"She was so proud that her son was fighting for our country, never suspecting that our country was killing him."

The likelihood is that he was exposed to the smoke emanating from burn pits. Most U.S. bases in Afghanistan, and until recently in Iraq, operate a burn pit 24/7. Everything no longer needed in the war effort is consumed in such pits. This includes medical waste, ammunition, amputated body parts, feces, paints and solvents, electronic equipment, old tires, plastics, lithium batteries, whole vehicles, jet fuel — and just about everything else under the sun, possibly including military equipment containing radioactive material.

"The American military will likely insist that it strictly controls the disposal of radioactive waste, but such assertions are not credible," former U.S. Air Force Captain Matthew J. Nasuti wrote two years ago in an article published by the Kabul Press. "While there are strict regulations, the time and cost of complying with them in a war zone are such that base commanders in Afghanistan most likely ignored them, opting instead for throwing the waste into burn pits."

While the Pentagon has continually denied there's any evidence linking the burn pits with health problems, the website Danger Room recently obtained a 2011 Army memo stating that the pit at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan may cause "long-term adverse health conditions" for the troops there, increasing their risk of "reduced lung function or exacerbated chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, atherosclerosis, or other cardiopulmonary diseases."

Many other conditions have been blamed on the burn pits, from skin rashes, headaches and diarrhea to leukemia, ALS and cancer. The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, Wash.) recently ran a story about Danielle Nienajadlo, an Iraq vet who died three years ago of leukemia. She'd been stationed at Joint Base Balad, where she started coughing up "mixtures of blood and black phlegm" after exposure to the thick, black smoke of the burn pit at the base.

"She would call her mom and complain of sores and bruises across her body. She told her sister that she had splitting headaches and that she was losing weight.

"She sent alarming photos home and her family pleaded with her to cut through the red tape and get medical attention.

"Her reports to superiors were met with accusations of laziness."

Not surprisingly, there's far more information available about the health effects of burn pits on American troops than on the local populations. But Nasuti's articles for the Kabul Press go into excruciating detail about the U.S. military's environmental irresponsibility in Afghanistan, where since 2001 it has "generated millions of kilograms of hazardous, toxic and radioactive wastes," virtually all of which "appears to have been buried, burned or secretly disposed of into the air, soil, groundwater and surface waters of Afghanistan."

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The waste even includes abandoned latrines, often dug near groundwater or uphill from surface water. "After a latrine pit is filled, it is apparently covered over with dirt and forgotten" — in defiance of the sort of restrictions on waste disposal in, say, the United States.

And the toxic pollution of waste disposal is only part of the hellish environmental consequences we're creating for the future. From the radioactive fallout spread by depleted uranium munitions to the destruction of the "compression-fragile" desert floor, we are pursuing a geopolitical strategy with single-minded, and ultimately suicidal, indifference to the consequences of our actions. And nothing can stop us except our own awakened consciences.

Submitted by Peter Aronson

COMMON GOALS FOR PEACE

Join Friends of Afghanistan!

By Jan West

Veterans for Peace is known for doing projects in countries as a way to promote peace. Friends of Afghanistan is an alumni Peace Corps group open to anyone who cares about peace and the people of Afghanistan. Since we share common goals, we are interested in attracting new members to our organization with yearly dues of \$15. We are offering complimentary memberships to anyone who served in Afghanistan during this current mission—from about 2002 to the present.

Peace Corps Volunteers served in Afghanistan from 1962-1979, when the Soviets invaded. Our members are involved in a number of projects to help the Afghan people, such as education for girls, school supplies for students, music books for schools, and contributions to a number of other Afghan charities.

If you are interested in membership, please contact jan-west@suddenlink.net or call 707-677-3655. I can send you a membership brochure and process your membership. Please check out our website at www.afghanconnections.org. Promoting peace by participating in projects for the Afghan people is a meaningful way to make the world a better place.

Submitted by GayLou Gilchrist

I DON'T REMEMBER

By Luke Hiken

I Don't Remember:

1) Voting to wage war against every Muslim nation that is not a pawn of U.S. capital.

2) Voting to support the use of unmanned drones as murder weapons against civilian populations.

3) Voting to characterize corporations as "people" for purposes of buying elections, and destroying whatever vestiges of democracy that might have existed in the U.S.

4) Voting to bail out Wall Street gangsters who destroyed the U.S. economy. I know I did not vote to immunize these crooks from prosecution for their theft of the wages and earnings of the American people.

5) Voting to destroy our educational system by indenturing students with impossibly burdensome loans and creating annual tuitions that only the super rich can afford.

6) Voting to construct the largest prison system in the world, imprisoning African-American and Latino/Chicano prisoners at 5 times their number in the U.S. population.

7) Voting to deport more than 1/2 million non-immigrants from this country during Obama's term of office alone, in spite of the fact that nobody else will perform the services they provide to the American people. The cultural and social losses created by our endless detainments and deportations are as destructive as the economic considerations of our policies.

8) Voting to allow oil companies and their cohorts to reap unimaginable profits to the detriment of the U.S. people, while destroying the natural resources of the earth.

9) Voting to wage war on women's rights to abortion, birth control, and an equal wage for their work.

10) Voting to permit corporations to export our jobs overseas, while paying no taxes on their obscene profits earned by paying slave wages to poor people throughout the world.

11) Voting to immunize police departments and hired mercenaries for their ongoing repression and violence against poor people and minorities.

12) Voting to legalize torture and renditions as national policy and practice.

13) Voting to allow the Pentagon to decide who is a criminal and who is not, and to imprison anybody anywhere, without probable cause, according to their militaristic worldview.

14) Voting to demand "austerity" from poor people, while allowing the greediest monsters that have ever lived to rule this nation and to thrive economically.

15) Voting to allow the pharmaceutical and insurance industries to deprive the American people of affordable health care and, thereby impoverishing the poor and disabled



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16) Voting to allow Christian fanatics to demonize gay people, the poor, and the marginalized from the benefits of our society.

17) Voting to allow vulture banks to steal people's homes and profit from their newly created homelessness.

18) Voting to allow 1% of the population to control more than 40% of the wealth of the nation.

BUT, I will certainly remember these things when either the Democrats or the Republicans ask me to vote for them in November.

Luke Hiken is an attorney who has engaged in the practice of criminal, military, immigration, and appellate law.

Fire All the Teachers! (and Other Inanities)

By David Macaray

Two of the most damaging misconceptions people have about labor unions are (1) that union members tend to be substandard workers (lazy, unreliable, surly, privileged), and (2) that union members can't be fired because their "masters" will always go to bat to protect them.

Where they got the notion that union members are incompetent employees is a mystery. After all, even a cursory analysis of the economics should make it clear that union jobs—those, typically, with the highest wages, superior benefits and best and safest working conditions—are going to attract the most talented workers in a community. Why wouldn't they? Why wouldn't the best jobs in a community attract the best people? Yet, we allow ourselves to be swayed by the propaganda.

And as widespread as this anti-union propaganda is, it's especially virulent when it comes to public service unions. Apparently, everyone and his brother (including President Obama and his Secretary of Education, the corporate lackey Arne Duncan) just naturally assume that it's the teachers' union that prevents conscientious, well-meaning school administrators from firing bad teachers.

People like to believe that if those grossly incompetent teachers did not belong to a powerful union, if they did not have cadres of union lawyers standing by ready to defend them, the administrators would be able to drain the swamp, to rid our schools of those

union-created monsters who are holding our students hostage, depriving them of a decent education. That may be a gripping narrative, but it's total fiction.

The following statistics are startling, but true. They were taken from the anti-union website "Teachers' Union Exposed." The site's most recent figures show that California school teachers are 87.5-percent unionized. Accordingly, the percentage of "experienced" California teachers that were fired was 2.03-percent, and the percentage of "probationary" teachers that were fired was 0.98-percent.

By comparison, North Carolina, which is 97.7-percent non-union, fired 0.6-percent of its experienced teachers, and 0.3-percent of its probationary teachers. In other words, California and its big, bad teachers' union was "tougher" on its union teachers than North Carolina was on its non-union teachers. It's puzzling. School administrators in non-unionized North Carolina are in the position to fire any teacher they choose, but they don't do that. They don't fire their teachers.

"California and its big, bad teachers' union was "tougher" on its union teachers than North Carolina was on its non-union teachers. It's puzzling. School administrators in non-unionized North Carolina are in the position to fire any teacher they choose, but they don't do that."

And why don't they? The answer is that teachers—everywhere and anywhere, North, South, East and West, union and non-union—don't deserve to be fired. Why on earth would they? Why on earth would we expect substantial numbers of our school teachers to be terminated for incompetence? Are our colleges and universities turning out such lousy teachers that we have no choice but to get rid of them?

We need to be clear about something. This move against the public schools and teachers' unions is being orchestrated not by educational reformers interested in improving our schools, but by greedy entrepreneurs looking to privatize the whole shebang. The prospect of having millions of kids leave the public schools and enroll in privates or for-profit charters represents a potential gold mine.

So the next time a person tries to tell you that it's the unions who are responsible for the problems our public schools are facing, take a moment to set them straight. Make it clear to them that this whole "union teacher vs. non-union teacher" dichotomy is a hoax. It's a con game. Put it to them in the simplest possible terms. We're being played for suckers.

Submitted by Jim Sorter



US Military Suicides Rising, Even As Combat Eases

Thursday, June 07, 2012

WASHINGTON — Suicides are surging among America's troops, averaging nearly one a day this year — the fastest pace in the nation's decade of war.

The 154 suicides for active-duty troops in the first 155 days of the year far outdistance the U.S. forces killed in action in Afghanistan — about 50 percent more — according to Pentagon statistics obtained by The Associated Press.

The numbers reflect a military burdened with wartime demands from Iraq and Afghanistan that have taken a greater toll than foreseen a decade ago. The military also is struggling with increased sexual assaults, alcohol abuse, domestic violence and other misbehavior.

Karzai Condemns American Soldiers

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has condemned the actions of five U.S. soldiers accused of being part of a squad that deliberately killed Afghan civilians.

In a speech to teachers in Kabul, Karzai said Wednesday that the U.S. troops killed Afghan youth and elders for "entertainment." The Afghan leader said Americans are "good people" and not cruel, but he wants them to know about the crimes committed by the rogue army unit.

The remarks were his first since the German news magazine Der Spiegel and U.S. magazine Rolling Stone published photos of U.S. soldiers posing and smiling over the bodies of dead civilians.

One of the soldiers in the photos pleaded guilty to murder last week and was sentenced to 24 years in prison for killing three civilians in southern Kandahar province. Four other U.S. servicemen are facing charges in connection with the murders.

The U.S. Army has apologized for "distress" caused by the photographs, and said they are "contrary to the standards and values of the United States Army."

Also Wednesday, NATO announced the results of its probe into a March 26 coalition airstrike in southern Helmand province. The coalition says the airstrike targeting a Taliban commander accidentally killed four Afghan civilians in the Nawzad district.

A NATO spokesman called the incident regrettable and offered condolences.

During his speech Wednesday, President Karzai also repeated his call to the Taliban to stop attacking schools. He said he hoped a

recent purported statement by Taliban leader Mullah Omar banning such attacks was true.

In other violence, the coalition said Wednesday that separate insurgent attacks killed three of its soldiers in eastern Afghanistan on Tuesday.

Military Rape Survivors Call On Congress To Stop The Silent Epidemic

By Lauren Brown

June 27, 2012 a group of veterans delivered letters signed by 200 military sexual assault and rape survivors to Congress urging them to pass the STOP Act. The letters were presented to Congresswoman Spier who introduced the Act to congress in November of 2011.

If passed, the STOP Act would remove the reporting of sexual assault and rape in the military outside of the chain of command and into the jurisdiction of the military's Sexual Assault Oversight and Response Office which is comprised of military and civilian experts.

Despite 17 congressional hearings over the past 25 years, there's been no major action taken to stem the "silent epidemic" of sexual assault in the military. It's been estimated that nearly 20,000 servicemembers were assaulted in 2010 though only a little more than 13 percent of the incidents were reported.

The group of women delivered the letters with the human rights organization, Protect Our Defenders, which provides support for men and women who have served in the military and been victims of sexual assault. A number of the women who went to Congress today were featured in the documentary, "The Invisible War," a film which gives voice to the staggering number of horrific sexual assaults that have gone unpunished.

The letter was from:

"200 Veterans who have been raped or sexually assaulted at least once while serving in the United States Armed Forces between 1971 – 2011. Retaliation, including discharge and punishment, happened to many of us who tried reporting the crime."

Many victims say that the way they were treated by the military after the incident and the military's failure to prosecute the assault is worse than the actual incident.





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LET US HEAR FROM YOU!



Welcome home. Wall Street loves you!!

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