



VETERANS FOR PEACE
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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

Recognizing the Language of Tyranny

By Chris Hedges

Posted 06 February 2011 on Truthdig

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Empires communicate in two languages. One language is expressed in imperatives. It is the language of command and force. This militarized language disdains human life and celebrates hyper masculinity. It demands. It makes no attempt to justify the flagrant theft of natural resources and wealth or the use of indiscriminate violence. When families are gunned down at a checkpoint in Iraq they are referred to as having been “lit up.” So it goes. The other language of empire is softer. It employs the vocabulary of ideals and lofty goals and insists that the power of empire is noble and benevolent. The language of beneficence is used to speak to those outside the centers of death and pillage, those who have not yet been totally broken, those who still must be seduced to hand over power to predators. The road traveled to total disempowerment, however, ends at the same place. It is the language used to get there that is different.

This language of blind obedience and retribution is used by authority in our inner cities, from Detroit to Oakland, as well as our prison systems. It is a language Iraqis and Afghans know intimately. But to the members of our dwindling middle class—as well as those in the working class who have yet to confront our new political and economic configuration—the powerful use phrases like the consent of the governed and democracy that help lull us into complacency. The longer we believe in the fiction that we are included in the corporate power structure, the more easily corporations pillage the country without the threat of rebellion. Those who know the truth are crushed. Those who do not are lied to. Those who consume and perpetuate the lies—including the liberal institutions of the press, the church, education, culture, labor and the Democratic Party—abet our disempowerment. No system of total control, including corporate control, exhibits its extreme forms at the beginning. These forms expand as they fail to encounter resistance.



The tactic of speaking in two languages is as old as empire itself. The ancient Greeks and the Romans did it. So did the Spanish conquistadors, the Ottomans, the French and later the British. Those who inhabit exploited zones on the peripheries of empire see and hear the truth. But the cries of those who are exploited are ignored or demonized. The rage they express does not resonate with those trapped in self-delusion, those who continue to trust in the ultimate goodness of empire. This is the truth articulated in Joseph Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness” and E.M. Forster’s “A Passage to India.” These writers understood that empire is about violence and theft. And the longer the theft continues, the more brutal empire becomes. The tyranny empire imposes on others it finally imposes on itself. The predatory forces unleashed by empire consume the host. Look around you.

The narratives we hear are those fabricated for us by the state, Hollywood and the press. These narratives are taught in our schools, preached in our pulpits and celebrated in war documentaries such as “Restrepo.” These narratives humanize and ennoble the enforcers of empire. The government, the military, the police and our intelligence agents are lionized. These control groups, we are assured, are the guardians of our virtues and our protectors. They produce our heroes. And those who challenge this narrative—who denounce the lies—become the enemy.

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Those who administer empire—elected officials, corporate managers, generals and the celebrity courtiers who disseminate the propaganda—become very wealthy. They make immense fortunes whether they deliver the nightly news, sit on the boards of corporations, or rise, lavished with corporate endorsements, within the vast industry of spectacle and entertainment. They all pay homage, even in moments defined as criticism, to the essential goodness of corporate power. They shut out all real debate. They ignore flagrant injustices and abuse. They peddle the illusions that keep us passive and amused. But as our society is reconfigured into an oligarchic system, with a permanent and vast underclass, along with a shrinking and unstable middle class, these illusions lose their power. The language of pleasant deception must be replaced with the overt language of force. It is hard to continue to live in a state of self-delusion once unemployment benefits run out, once the only job available comes without benefits or a living wage, once the future no longer conforms to the happy talk that saturates our airwaves. At this point rage becomes the engine of response, and whoever can channel that rage inherits power. The manipulation of that rage has become the newest task of the corporate propagandists, and the failure of the liberal class to defend core liberal values has left its members with nothing to contribute to the debate.

The Belgian King Leopold, promising to abolish slavery and usher the Congolese into the “modern” era, was permitted by his European allies to form the Congo Free State in 1885. It was touted as a humanitarian gesture, as was the Spanish conquest of the Americas, as was our own occupation of Iraq. Leopold organized a ruthless force of native and foreign overseers—not unlike our own mercenary armies—to loot the Congo of ivory and rubber. By the time the Belgian monarch was done, some 5 million to 8 million Congolese had been slaughtered. It was the largest act of genocide in the modern era until the Nazi Holocaust. Leopold, even in the midst of his rampage, was lionized in Europe for his virtue. He was loathed in the periphery—as we are in Iraq and Afghanistan—where the Congolese and others understood what he was about. But these voices, like the voices of those we oppress, were almost never heard.

The Nazis, for whom the Holocaust was as much a campaign of plunder as it was a campaign to rid Europe of Jews, had two methods for greeting arrivals at their four extermination camps. If the transports came from Western Europe, the savage Ukrainian and Lithuanian guards, with their whips, dogs and clubs, were kept out of sight. The wealthier European Jews were politely ushered into an elaborate ruse, including fake railway stations complete with flower beds, until once stripped naked they became incapable of resistance and could be herded in rows of five under whips into the gas chambers. The Nazis knew that those who had not been broken, those who possessed a belief in their own personal empowerment, would fight back. When the transports came from the east, where Jews had long lived in fear, tremendous poverty and terror, there was no need for such theatrics. Mothers, fathers, the elderly and children, accus-

tomed to overt repression and the language of command and retribution, were brutally driven from the transports by sadistic guards. The object was to create mass hysteria. The fate of the two groups was the same. It was the tactic that differed.

All centralized power, once restraints and regulations are abolished, once it is no longer accountable to citizens, knows no limit to internal and external plunder. The corporate state, which has emasculated our government, is creating a new form of feudalism, a world of masters and serfs. It speaks to those who remain in a state of self-delusion in the comforting and familiar language of liberty, freedom, prosperity and electoral democracy. It speaks to the poor and the oppressed in the language of naked coercion. But, here too, all will end up in the same place.

Those trapped in the blighted inner cities that are our internal colonies or brutalized in our prison system, especially African-Americans, see what awaits us all. So do the inhabitants in southern West Virginia, where coal companies have turned hundreds of thousands of acres into uninhabitable and poisoned wastelands. Poverty, repression and despair in these peripheral parts of empire are as common as drug addiction and cancer. Iraqis, Afghans, Pakistanis and Palestinians can also tell us who we are. They know that once self-delusion no longer works it is the iron fist that speaks. The solitary and courageous voices that rise up from these internal and external colonies of devastation are silenced or discredited by the courtiers who serve corporate power. And even those who do hear these voices of dissent often cannot handle the truth. They prefer the Potemkin facade. They recoil at the “negativity.” Reality, especially when you grasp what corporations are doing in the name of profit to the planet’s ecosystem, is terrifying.

All tyrannies come endowed with their own peculiarities. This makes it hard to say one form of totalitarianism is like another. There are always enough differences to make us unsure that history is repeating itself. The corporate state does not have a Politburo. It does not dress its Homeland Security agents in jackboots. There is no raving dictator. American democracy—like the garishly painted train station at the Nazi extermination camp Treblinka—looks real even as the levers of power are in the hands of corporations. But there is one aspect the corporate state shares with despotic regimes and the collapsed empires that have plagued human history. It too communicates in two distinct languages, that is until it does not have to, at which point it will be too late.

Chris Hedges is a senior fellow at The Nation Institute and a weekly columnist for Truthdig. His latest book is “Death of the Liberal Class.”

Submitted by Nate Lomba



Meeting a Young Marine-To-Be

By Dave Lindorff

Published on Monday, January 10, 2011 by ThisCant-BeHappening.net

At the local YMCA today, I ran into a boy who was a childhood friend of my son's. As my kid goes to a public arts high school in Philadelphia outside of our local school district, I don't see much of his old grade-school friends any more. This boy, who used to be over at our house years ago at least once a week, recognized me right away though, and said, "Hey Mr. Lindorff, I haven't seen you in years. How's Jed!"

I was impressed by how he'd grown up, tall and strong looking. He was headed for the basketball court. I asked him, since both he and my son are seniors this year, where he was applying for college, and he stunned me by saying he had signed up for the Marines. "I'm going to be going in after graduation," he said proudly. "The recruiter came to school, and he convinced me it's a good move."

I asked him what he planned to do, and he said, "Helicopter gunner! I'm really excited and proud!"

This was really shocking. This kid doesn't own a gun. I doubt if he's ever shot at anything except maybe a target with a .22 rifle at Boy Scout Camp, and now he's all excited about manning a machine gun in a helicopter, where he'll be shooting down at Afghan fighters--and inevitably at civilians, too--in a matter of months.

I really didn't know what to say. I awkwardly told him "congratulations," because I could see he was proud of his "accomplishment" and because I didn't want to have him cut me off as a possible confidante. Then I added, "You know of course that I'm not really in favor of what the Marines are doing?"

He smiled and said, "Yeah, I know."

"Well, good luck and stay safe," I said, again not knowing what else to say. How could I, standing in the hall there, tell him that he was simply signing on to be another expendable tool in the American Empire's effort to subdue an impoverished people on the far side of the world who pose absolutely no threat to America? And while I don't want to see him killing people in Afghanistan, I also want him to come home safely.

Unaware of my conflicted state of mind, and of how upset I was at his news, he ran off to play his game, at least for now still just another kid on a basketball court.

I had finished my run, so I headed for the exit to get my car and go home, when I ran into the boy's mother and older sister, both just coming into the building. I hadn't seen either of them in at least a year either.

They both greeted me and asked how my family was, and what my son's college plans were. After I had caught them up, I said, a bit hesitantly, "I ran into your son. He told me he's joining the Marines."

His mother looked upset and said, "Yes. I don't know. We were going over colleges with him, and getting ready to work on his applications, and then he told us he wanted to enlist."

"I hear he's going to be a helicopter gunner," I said.

The mother stiffened and looked at her daughter, a senior in college who looked surprised, too. "He said he was going to be a helicopter mechanic!" she said.

"Oops," I told them. "I guess I shouldn't have said anything."

"No," she said. "I'm going to have to talk with him. But the trouble is, if that's what he says he's going to do, there's nothing we can do to stop him."

Well, maybe, and maybe not. I'd certainly try if it were my son, starting with showing him that horrifying footage of a blood-thirsty US helicopter crew's joke-filled slaughter of a bunch of innocent civilians in Baghdad, including two employers of Reuters. I'd also have him read the letter of apology to the Iraqi victims' families, written by two soldiers, former Army Specialists Josh Stieber and Ethan McCord, who had appeared in that video because they came on the scene of slaughter at the end, and realized what had been done was an atrocity.

But while it may tragically be too late for my son's childhood friend, who has already signed on the dotted line, there is something we can do to stop more of this kind of thing from hap-

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, March 3rd
at 7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held in the Com-
mons 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.



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pening, and that is to protest the actions of Marine recruiters and recruiters from the other branches of the military in our public high schools.

The schools have been told, thanks to a law passed by Congress, that they must allow recruiters into high schools to speak with students and to try to lure them into signing up. Parents have a right to have their children's names removed from recruiting lists so they won't be personally invited to meet with a recruiter, or get recruiting literature sent to them, but they are still free when roaming the halls, to go see a recruiter on their own.

The only answer to this effort to suck our kids into service of the Empire as more cannon-fodder is to demand, and to provide, an alternative. Contact your local Veterans for Peace chapter (www.veteransforpeace.org) or Iraq Veterans Against War (www.IVAW.org) and urge them to send a representative to talk to the kids at your high school. If you're a veteran, volunteer to go yourself, and tell kids why signing up is a bad idea. If you're not a veteran, or relative of a veteran, get people with experience to go and tell what war is really about, and about why it's not what America should be doing. (Colleague John Grant, who is with VFP, says don't expect getting a counter-recruitment presence in your high school to be easy. Most schools only allow such speakers to go to a specific teacher's classroom, not to an assembly session, whereas the most appropriate thing would be to have access to match whatever the recruiters are offered. That doesn't mean VFP or IVAW activists aren't anxious to get access, so contact them and try to get them to the kids.)

If you want a good argument, check out this little film which quotes Marine Brigadier General Smedley Butler, and is addressed to parents, and particularly mothers of young children.

Stop the propagandizing of our kids into becoming soldiers for Empire. We've had enough death and killing!

*Dave Lindorff is a Philadelphia-based journalist and columnist. He is author of *Marketplace Medicine: The Rise of the For-Profit Hospital Chains* (Bantam Books, 1992), and his latest book "The Case for Impeachment" (St. Martin's Press, 2006). All his work is available at www.thiscantbehappening.net*

Submitted by Richard Gilchrist

Resist the War Machine! March 19, 2011

by Richard Gilchrist

December 16, Washington, DC, the White House — "The speeches were over. There was a mournful harmonica rendition of taps. The 500 protesters fell silent. One hundred and thirty-one men and women, many of them military veterans wearing old fatigues, formed a single, silent line. Under a heavy snowfall and to the slow

beat of a drum, they walked to the White House fence. They stood there until they were arrested."—Chris Hedges from "Bitter Memories of War on the Way to Jail."

The wars and the occupation of Iraq still rage. We read almost daily of new atrocities spawned by our corporate government's ruthless militarism. People in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Palestine, as well as our own soldiers, experience these things firsthand.

When soldiers, wounded and maimed, both in body and soul, come home, what do they find? Do they find relief from the horror of war and killing, or does it haunt them, affecting their families, friends and communities? Do they find accessible medical care? Do they find support from the very military they served or are they cast off like so many no longer useful tools? Do they readily find gainful employment or a steadily deteriorating economy and job market for the poor and middle classes while Wall Street thrives?

What about the people in the countries the war machine is still destroying, supposedly to bring them democracy and freedom? Can we imagine what their lives are like? What about the planet we live on? Are we aware that the U.S. war machine is the greatest polluter on earth?

Hedges says, "War perverts and destroys you. It pushes you closer and closer to your own annihilation—spiritual, emotional and, finally, physical. It destroys the continuity of life, tearing apart all systems, economic, social, environmental and political, that sustain us as human beings."

And we who have opened our eyes and hearts, what do we do? Was the December 16 veteran - led civil resistance enough?

On March 19—the anniversary of the brutal invasion of Iraq, where over a million Iraqis and almost 5,000 U.S. soldiers died with thousands more grievously injured—as the occupation of Iraq and the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan continue unabated, Veterans For Peace is calling for an even larger veteran-led nonviolent civil resistance at the White House.

As these words are written, men, women, and children are dying because of our government's deadly policy of war. Yet the state of endless war threatens to achieve normalcy in this country. We cannot let this happen. There is no justification for these wars, but there is a desperate and urgent need to show the United States and the world that nonviolent resistance will continue to grow in strength and numbers until these wars end.

There are two critical ways that you can help build resistance here in the United States. Most important, put your body on the line for peace and join us on March 19!

If you can't do that, or even if you can, please support this effort with your donation. With your support and participation we'll be at the White House March 19, resisting the war machine with numbers far surpassing our effort in December.



PEACE POETRY

FRIDAY MAY 6TH
**HUMBOLDT
UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALISTS'
FELLOWSHIP HALL**
**23 FELLOWSHIP WAY
BAYSIDE, CALIFORNIA**

7 P.M. TO 8 P.M.

*Buddhist
Peace
Fellowship*



CONTEST CELEBRATION



IS IT TIME?

By Richard Gilchrist

In just about every US male's life, the time arrives when he takes himself to the post office (now on the internet) and registers for Selective Service, i.e. the DRAFT. I think it is time that we offer gender equality and require that the young ladies have this opportunity as well. i.e. '...put themselves in involuntary servitude to their good old Uncle Sam.'

The young ladies should be given this opportunity. They would learn the many useful skills that are part of military service. They can learn how to make hospital corners on the beds, pulling the sheets so tight that one can bounce a coin off their bed: spit shine their boots: and arrange their equipment in the prescribed manner. They would also learn how to march including an oblique or flanking maneuvers. More importantly, they would learn how to shoot and kill someone at 100, 200, 300, and possibly 500 yards. They might even learn how to remove a hang fire out of a mortar tube. And, my favorite, would be the opportunity to learn how to set a mine field and remove mines after the field has remained over night during which time the 'enemy' has had a chance to play in their flower garden.

Do I really want young ladies to sign up? In some ways I do,,, because that might awaken the American people that war isn't a game. It might make them realize that they could lose their sweet young thing that not too many years before was playing with dolls.

I've come to the conclusion that as long as it is just poverty-bound young men who volunteer for the military, our country will continue to enter into the misadventures of war. If we were to have a draft, with no deferments, then we might have a change in the public attitude.

Of course, we will always need a military... But I would like to see it reduced to the point that its major function would be to provide a guard of honor for visiting dignitaries.

Just a thought... Rich

THE MAN WHO KNOWS EVERYTHING

The privacy and dignity of our citizens (are) being whittled away by sometimes imperceptible steps. Taken individually, each step may be of little consequence. But when viewed as a whole, there begins to emerge a society unlike any we have seen—a society in which government may intrude into the secret region of a person's life.

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas



Rights Abuse at Clinton's Rights Talk: Police Targeted Violence of Christian Vet

February 16th, 2011 7:04 pm ET

Vets for Peace T-shirt Sales Could Boom

In what will surely be recorded as a historical moment of US government brutal human rights hypocrisy and possibly a sales boost for Vets For Peace t-shirt sales, at Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's speech at George Washington University Tuesday, condemning human rights violations by governments that arrest protesters and prevent free expression, police assaulted 71-year-old Ray McGovern and jailed him for standing peacefully as he listened to her. McGovern was wearing a Vet for Peace t-shirt.

This latest demonstration of US crackdown on dissent has resulted in the nation's top human rights leaders condemning Tuesday's U.S. police brutality.

"Hillary Clinton talks of freedom without pause while watching Ray McGovern be beat up by guards/goons. Freedom is one of those things only appropriate for the 'others,' not Americans. A real class act," stated Stephen Soldz of Psychologists for Social Responsibility and Director, Center for Research, Evaluation, and Program Development Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis.

Wednesday, Partnership for Civil Justice (PCJ) released a statement about the assault on McGovern and asked that it be posted on Facebook.

According to PCJ, McGovern "was assaulted grabbed from the audience in plain view of her by police and an unidentified official in plain clothes, brutalized and left bleeding in jail."

Clinton never paused speaking according to PCJ.

"When Secretary Clinton began her speech, Mr. McGovern remained standing silently in the audience and turned his back. Mr. McGovern, a veteran Army officer who also worked as a C.I.A. analyst for 27 years, was wearing a Veterans for Peace t-shirt.

"Blind-sided by security officers who pounced upon him, Mr. McGovern remarked, as he was hauled out the door, "So this is America?" Mr. McGovern is covered with bruises, lacerations and contusions inflicted in the assault.

"Mr. McGovern is being represented by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF). "It is the ultimate definition of lip service that Secretary of State Clinton would be trumpeting the U.S. government's supposed concerns for free speech rights and this man

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would be simultaneously brutalized and arrested for engaging in a peaceful act of dissent at her speech,” stated attorney Mara Verheyden-Hilliard of the PCJF.

Mr. McGovern works for Tell the Word publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C.

Mike Ferner, a Vietnam-era veteran, told Democracy Now that he was arrested at the Jesse Brown V.A. Medical Center in Chicago for wearing a Veterans for Peace T-Shirt

Vets for Peace t-shirts are available at: <https://www.vfpstore.org/index.asp?PageAction=VIEWPROD&ProdID=7>

Press Release

For Immediate Release

**Contact: Vanessa Pike-Vrtiak vp24@humboldt.edu,
530-448-9458**

Website: www.walkamileinhershoes.org

Men Walk a Mile In Her Shoes to stop gender violence (Eureka, CA). Men from all walks of life will walk one mile in women’s high heels on Saturday, April 2nd, 2011 starting at the Gazebo in Old Town Eureka, to protest rape, sexual assault and gender violence. Proceeds from the sponsored walkers will go to Rape Crisis Services of Eureka, California.

Male community members and leaders will proclaim their solidarity with the rape prevention movement by marching in high heels, with women and children marching at their side. Educators, students, law enforcement officers, elected officials and others are expected to participate. Speakers include Paul Gallegos, Humboldt County District Attorney.

The event begins at 6pm, with a rally and late registration, the march will follow at 7pm. Several massage therapists are donating their time and talents, also.

Men who can not wear high heels can wear specially decorated shoes. Women and children can wear regular shoes. Shoes are available for those who don’t have their own high-heels.

If you have large size high heel shoes you can donate to the event please bring them to the Humboldt State University Sociology Department located on the 5th floor of the BSS building.

Inspired by the old saying, “you can’t understand a person’s experience until you’ve walked a mile in their shoes,” men will literally walk one mile in women’s high-heeled shoes.

We’re not only raising much needed funds, but we’re sending the message to other men that violence against women is not OK, this event was started by men to support women. We want women to know this not just their cause. Gender violence hurts all of us.

Given the violence against women in our military services this event welcomes all veterans to join in support of those women in the military who don’t have a voice against the atrocities of violence and rape being committed against them.

Air Force Suicide Rate Highest in 17 Years

By Jennifer H. Svan

Air Force suicides hit a 17-year high in 2010, and officials say relationship problems remain the No. 1 reason airmen decide to end their lives. Through Tuesday, 54 active-duty airmen have committed suicide — 13 more than last year — and the highest rate since 1993.

The other services are reporting slightly lower numbers among active-duty troops. In the Army, there have been 144 confirmed or suspected suicides among active-duty soldiers, compared with 162 in 2009. The Navy says its suicide rate dropped from 46 in 2009 to 33 this year, and the Marine Corps say its numbers fell from 52 last year to 46 so far in 2010.

“Suicide prevention remains a top priority of Air Force leadership, and our leaders at all levels are fully engaged in the prevention effort,” said Maj. Michael McCarthy, Air Force Suicide Prevention Program manager, in an e-mail to Stars and Stripes.

The service’s research has found that deployment appears to be one of the lowest risk factors, according to Donna Tinsley, a spokeswoman with the Air Force surgeon general’s office.

That research seems to be in line with recent Army findings: For 2010, a majority of active-duty soldiers who killed themselves had either zero or only one previous deployment, despite soldiers typically heading to the combat zones every other year.

Last spring, a study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health found the Air Force’s suicide prevention program had, for the most part, been effective in lowering the suicide rate among the service’s 325,000-plus active-duty ranks. The study’s authors, however, cautioned that the program’s success was contingent on ongoing monitoring and implementation efforts and “cannot be maintained by ‘inherent momentum.’”

Air Force officials say they believe the service’s suicide prevention efforts continue to have a positive impact on airmen’s quality of life, but they are also rolling out additional programs to help airmen in need. Supervisors, for example, are starting to receive training on how to directly intervene with airmen at highest risk for suicide, officials said.

According to Marine Corps guidance, a suicide attempt is defined as “a self-inflicted, potentially injurious behavior with a non-fatal outcome for which there is evidence ... of intent to die.” A spokes-

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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.

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woman at the Air Force surgeon general's office said "resulting hospitalization is the definition used to validate the attempts."

This year, 197 airmen have survived suicide attempts, while the Marine Corps has reported 165 attempts. The Navy said 60 sailors have attempted suicide. Army numbers were not available.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN UKIAH, March 4,5,6

The focus of the conference is to develop regional friendships and the use of social media to create an effective network.

The program time slots are subject to rearrangement.

A note on Chapter introductions and member concerns: We do not have time to pres-

ent a variety of workshops. We encourage workshops ideas. Presenters will have the opportunity to outline their programs. Presenters are encouraged to distribute resources; articles, web-sites etc

It will be helpful if those wishing to speak to let us know before hand. It will allow a fair time allotment for each speaker. If many want to speak, we can make time throughout the weekend.

We will jointly decide on an issue for immediate collaboration.

In the tradition of VFP organizing, it is a bit ragged and seemingly chaotic. Some juggling continues. But when the curtain rises, we'll be ready.

Veterans For Peace
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