



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

MARCH
2015

"Cutting Through the Fog of War"

ATTENTION VFP MEMBERS

THE MARCH CHAPTER MEETING HAS BEEN CHANGED TO MARCH 12, 2015

SO YOU CAN ATTEND A SCREENING OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

NUCLEAR SAVAGE

THE ISLANDS OF SECRET PROJECT 4.1

A heartbreaking and intimate portrait of Pacific Islanders struggling for dignity and survival after decades of intentional radiation poisoning at the hands of the US government

Thursday, March 5, 2015

Arcata Theater Lounge • 1086 G Street, Arcata

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. • Program starts at 7:00 p.m.

\$3⁰⁰ Donation at the door • Food & Beverages extra

Sponsored by Humboldt Baykeeper and the VFP Golden Rule Project





An open letter to Humboldt State University (HSU) President Lisa Rossbacher and the HSU community

We, the members of Veterans for Peace, Humboldt Bay Chapter 56, endorse and support Unified Students of Humboldt in their struggle for social justice at HSU. While we do not have enough information to take a stand on the firing of Dr. Jacquelyn Bolman as Director of the Indian Natural Resources Science and Engineering Program (INRSEP), we do have enough information to object to and be deeply troubled by the way in which it was carried out. Considering the history of physical and cultural genocide of Native Americans in this country, we believe that the manner in which Dr. Bolman was fired was culturally insensitive and resulted in emotional and spiritual trauma for both Dr. Bolman and her students.

We strongly agree with the Unified Students of Humboldt that INRSEP should not have been removed from the College of Natural Resources and Sciences – where it had an annual budget of \$40,000 in discretionary funds – and installed in a separate and unfunded program in 2013. We encourage the administration at HSU to restore INRSEP to the College of Natural Resources and Sciences and to create a consistent funding source for the program.

HSU stands on Wiyot Tribal land in Humboldt County which has a larger population of Native Americans than any county in California. We believe that INRSEP and Native American Studies in general should be strengthened, not underfunded and marginalized by the HSU administration. We are greatly concerned to learn that in 1998, the Native American Studies Department had five full time faculty. Today, the department has been reduced to one and a half faculty members. We urge the administration to, at a minimum, restore the faculty of Native American Studies to its 1998 level.

We believe that the administration is missing an historic opportunity to make HSU the premier university for Native American Studies in the CSU and within the United States. Indeed, HSU can and should be the model campus in the country for culturally sensitive and inclusive higher education opportunities for Native American students, the dissemination of information about Native American culture and history, and the study and preservation of local Native American cultures and languages. Rather than HSU being estranged from local Native American tribes, it should become a center for welcoming and honoring tribal elders, leaders, and Native American scholars.

We have hope for a positive outcome and resolution to this conflict. This would require the administration at HSU to come to the table with humility and a willingness to learn. These are the hallmarks of excellent educators.

Sincerely,

*Rob Hepburn
Member Coordinating Committee*

*Stephen Stammes
Member Coordinating Committee*

*Humboldt Bay Chapter 56 Veterans for Peace, Inc.
P.O.Box 532, Bayside, CA 95524*



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DRONES KILLING CIVILIANS

By Craig Whitlock

Two influential human rights groups say they have freshly documented dozens of civilian deaths in U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen, contradicting assertions by the Obama administration that such casualties are rare.

In Yemen, Human Rights Watch investigated six selected airstrikes since 2009 and concluded that at least 57 of the 82 people killed were civilians, including a pregnant woman and three children who perished in a September attack.

In Pakistan, Amnesty International investigated nine suspected U.S. drone strikes that occurred between May 2012 and July 2013 in the territory of North Waziristan. The group said it found strong evidence that more than 30 civilians were killed in four of the attacks.

The basic circumstances of each of the drone strikes had been previously reported by local and international news outlets. But the human rights groups said they were able to shed further light on the incidents by interviewing survivors, other witnesses and government officials in both countries.

Most drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen occur in remote areas that are often hostile to outsiders, making independent assessments difficult.

Explore documented drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia

The groups' findings coincide with a report released Friday by a U.N. human rights investigator, who estimated that 2,200 people have been killed in drone strikes over the past decade in Pakistan.

Of those casualties, at least 400 were civilians and 200 others were "probable noncombatants," according to the U.N. official, Ben Emmerson. He said the statistics were provided by Pakistan's Foreign Ministry.

The U.S. government almost never publicly acknowledges its role in individual drone strikes, and its legal justifications for targeting specific people are shrouded in secrecy.

Partly as a result, estimates of drone-related casualties vary wildly. Sorting out how many people were legitimate targets under the laws of war and how many were bystanders is an even greater challenge.

In their reports, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International called on the Obama administration to make its drone-targeting policies more transparent and to publicly investigate reports of civilian casualties.

"The full picture will only come to light when U.S. authorities fully disclose the facts, circumstances and legal basis for each of its drone strikes," Amnesty International concluded in its report, titled "Will I Be Next? U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan."

Caitlin Hayden, a White House spokeswoman, declined to comment on the reports. But she cited a speech by President Obama in May in which he announced narrower guidelines for drone attacks. Obama said drones would be used only against people who pose a "continuing, imminent threat" to the United States and only in cases in which the avoidance of civilian casualties would be "a near-certainty."

Reports published by two prominent human rights groups on Tuesday criticized the Obama administration's drone strategy, accusing the White House of indiscriminately killing civilians and ignoring international law. (Reuters)

"As the President emphasized, the use of lethal force, including from remotely piloted aircraft, commands the highest level of attention and care," Hayden said in an e-mail.

Drone strikes in Pakistan are carried out by the CIA under a covert program. In Yemen, the CIA and the military's Joint Special Operations Command conduct drone attacks. Spokesmen for the CIA and the Pentagon declined to comment. In each country, the number of U.S. drone strikes has dropped in the past year.

Amnesty International highlighted a July 6, 2012, drone attack in the village of Zowi Sidgi, near the city of Miran Shah, in which it

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, March 12th at
7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held at 24 Uni-
tarian Fellowship Way, Bayside,
Jacoby Creek Road. Veterans and
non-veterans are more than wel-
come to come and help us dialogue
about what we together can do to
bring about peace in this complex
world.



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said 18 civilians — including a 14-year-old boy — were killed.

In that case, a group of male laborers had gathered in a tent for dinner when a missile blast killed 10 of them. A few minutes later, as rescuers arrived at the scene to treat the wounded, another round of missiles killed eight more people, according to Amnesty.

In Yemen, Human Rights Watch singled out a Sept. 2, 2012, air-strike in the village of Sarar that blew up a minibus, killing 12 passengers, including three children and a pregnant woman. The group said the Yemeni government, which works closely with U.S. counterterrorism forces, later admitted that the attack had been a mistake and compensated families of the victims.

In most of the other drone strikes cited in the reports, the human rights groups admitted that the scenarios were much less clear-cut. They acknowledged that many of those who died were suspected to be al-Qaeda or Taliban members. In other instances, civilians died alongside armed combatants.

But in virtually all cases, the groups said, it was impossible to know whether the targets had met Obama's threshold of posing an imminent threat to the United States, because U.S. officials have kept that information a secret.

Craig Whitlock covers the Pentagon and national security. He has reported for The Washington Post since 1998.

Iraq Vet, Ross Caputi's View on Academy Nominated Movie - American Sniper

January 21, 2015

Ross Caputi, former Marine who participated in the 2nd Siege of Fallujah.

Chris Kyle built his reputation as a sniper during one of the most criminal operations of the entire occupation of Iraq, the 2nd siege of Fallujah.

What American Sniper offers us — more than a heart-wrenching tale about Chris Kyle's struggle to be a soldier, a husband, and a father; more than an action packed story about America's most lethal sniper — is an exposure of the often hidden side of American war culture. The criminality that has characterized American military engagements since the American Indian Wars, and most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan, is hardly noticeable in this film. And that's exactly my point.

Your average American viewer might be surprised to find out

that Chris Kyle built his reputation as a sniper during one of the most criminal operations of the entire occupation of Iraq, the 2nd siege of Fallujah. He or she certainly won't learn this by watching American Sniper, which doesn't even hint that Chris Kyle ever did anything in Iraq except kill bad guys and defend America. And this speaks volumes about how little we understand the wars that our country fights around the world.

Perhaps my argument seems strange — that the most insightful part of this film is what is not in it. However, I believe that these omissions reflect more than just what the director decided to be irrelevant to the plot. These omissions reveal an unconscious psychological process that shields our ideas about who we are as individuals and as a nation. This process, known as "moral disengagement", is extremely common in militaristic societies. But what is fascinating about American Sniper is how these omissions survive in the face of overwhelming evidence of the crimes that Chris Kyle participated in. The fact that a man who participated in the 2nd siege of Fallujah — an operation that killed between 4,000 to 6,000 civilians, displaced 200,000, and may have created an epidemic of birth defects and cancers — can come home, be embraced as a hero, be celebrated for the number of people he has killed, write a bestselling book based on that experience, and have it made into a Hollywood film is something that we need to reflect on as a society.

It is not my intention to accuse Chris Kyle of committing war crimes as an individual, or to attack his character in any way. Some critics have pointed out the many racist and anti-Islamic comments that Chris made in his autobiography (these comments are significantly toned down in the film). Others have noted his jingoistic beliefs. However, I too participated in the 2nd siege of Fallujah as a US Marine. And like Chris, I said some racist and despicable things while I was in Iraq. I am in no position to judge this man, nor do I think it is important to do so. I am far more interested in our reaction as a society to Chris Kyle, than I am in the nuances of his personality.

In both the book and the film, Chris Kyle comes off as a man who is slightly embarrassed by the labels that his comrades-in-arms and his society throw upon him, such as "legend" or "hero". This comes off as very selfless and humble of him. But the more important point is that we are the ones who cast him into this designation as hero. And the financial success of Chris Kyle's autobiography and Clint Eastwood's cinematic adaptation of it reveals just how willing America is to embrace this man and his story, despite its factual inaccuracies.

Perhaps the only thing that I think is import to say about Chris Kyle the individual is that a man like Chris has the power to legitimize this sanitized version of events in Iraq that not all veterans have. Somehow in our culture, combat experience is mistaken for knowledge about a war. And Chris Kyle's status as a Navy SEAL with mountains of medals and ribbons, multiple

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deployments to Iraq, and battle field accolades that are unmatched makes him an authority on the topic of Iraq to those who don't know better.

I sympathize with Chris, because I believed many of the same things he believed while I was in Iraq: That Saddam Hussein had Weapons of Mass Destruction. That our mission was just and good. That the people we were fighting against in Iraq wanted to kill Americans because of some irrational political ideology or fanatical religious beliefs. And that most Iraqis wanted us in their country.

Notice how within this ideological framework, the emotional turmoil that Chris goes through and the strain that his multiple deployments put on his family gets interpreted as a sacrifice that he bravely and consciously makes for a noble cause. Our mission in Iraq is, of course, understood as a peace keeping and nation building operation, not as the imposition of a political and economic project against the will of the majority of Iraqis. Similarly, "hearts and minds" become an object to be won, rather than something to be respected. The lives that Chris ends are interpreted as "confirmed kills", not murder. And the people he kills are interpreted as "terrorists", not as people defending their country from a foreign, invading and occupying army.

This ideological framework is America's war culture. Absent these ideological assumptions, the suffering that Chris and his family go through, and his tally of confirmed kills, do not get interpreted as brave sacrifices or heroic acts—they can only be tragic.

Let me reiterate, I am not accusing Chris of being guilty of war crimes, nor am I saying that he was a bad person. But I am arguing that he was not a hero. He and I both participate in an illegal and immoral war and occupation, and that deserves no praise or recognition. In particular, we both have the same blood on our hands for helping to destroy the city of Fallujah.

It was not the actions of individuals that made the 2nd siege of Fallujah the atrocity that was. It was the way the mission was structured and orchestrated. The US did not treat military action as a last resort. The peace negotiations with the leadership in Fallujah were canceled by the US. And almost no effort was taken to make a distinction between civilian men and combatants. In fact, in many instances civilians and combatants were deliberately conflated. All military aged males were forced to stay within the city limits of Fallujah (women and children were warned to flee the city) regardless of whether there was any evidence that they had picked up arms against the Americans. Also, water and electricity was cut to the entire city, and humanitarian aid was turned away. Thus, an estimated 50,000 civilians were trapped in their city during this month long siege without water or electricity and very limited supplies of food. They also had to survive a ground siege that was conducted with indiscriminate tactics and weapons, like the use of reconnaissance-by-fire, white phosphorous, and the bombing of residential neighborhoods. The main hospital was also treated as a military target. The end result was a human tragedy, an event that should be remembered alongside other US atrocities like the massacres at

Wounded Knee or My Lai.

But none of these documented facts come through in American Sniper. Instead, the plot is guided by Chris Kyle's autobiography, in which his narration of his life story describes the Iraq war and occupation through the lens of a number of common, but false, beliefs—like, for example, that the people we were fighting against were evil because Islam taught them to kill Americans.

One scene shows Chris in a moral dilemma as he is on a rooftop with his sniper rifle, and through the scope he sees a woman walking with a young child next to her (presumably her son) as she carries a grenade toward a US patrol. Chris must either kill a mother and her child or leave his countrymen exposed to an attack.

In his autobiography, Chris says that this event happened in Nasiriya during the initial invasion. However, Clint Eastwood decided to situate this scene during the 2nd siege of Fallujah in 2004. Also, in the film the woman hands the grenade to her son and encourages him to rush at the US patrol, whereas in the book it is the woman who tries to throw the grenade. Did Clint Eastwood think that this is a more representative portrayal of the Iraqi resistance? It's not. These human-shield tactics were extremely rare and were only used by the most marginal and unpopular militias.

In the film, Chris kills both the woman and her son. Although visibly conflicted about what he felt obligated to do, he comments that, "that was evil like I ain't never seen before".

Despite these revisions, I believe there is another moral dilemma in this scene that may not be obvious to American viewers: That woman had every right to attack the illegal, foreign invaders in her country, whether you agree with her tactics or not. We had no right to invade a sovereign nation, occupy it against the will of the majority of its citizens, and patrol their streets. Thus, Chris must either suppress legitimate armed resistance and defend an invading army, or violate his orders. This moral dilemma never once occurred to Chris Kyle. And the backlash that I'm sure this suggestion will receive attests to the war culture in our country that prevents us from seeing ourselves as Iraqis do, as the aggressor.

This is the problem with veteran narrations about their war experience—they are often told through an emotionally charged, ideological filter that reflects the misinformation told to them by their leaders. And as a society we do nothing to correct these inaccurate accounts of America's wars. Instead, we eat them up, celebrate them as truth, and feed them to the next generation of Americans who are doomed to make the same mistakes Chris and I made.

Partly, this comes from a general confusion that supporting the troops means not challenging their perceptions about the objectives of their mission, of who they were fighting against, and why. But I think also, as a society, we want veterans to tell us heroic,

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bitter-sweet stories about sacrifice and bravery. Voices like Chris Kyle's emerge and are embraced because they tell us exactly what we want to hear. They merely reaffirm preexisting beliefs about the benevolence of American wars and the righteousness of American armed service people. That's why American Sniper has been so successful. It reassures us of what we want to believe about Iraq and about our veterans, and Chris Kyle's combat credentials make it believable.

At the end of the day, it's the Chris Kyles who we embrace as heroes, not the Chelsea Mannings. And we will surely suffer for this as a society, but probably not before we make other societies suffer first.

Author's bio: Ross Caputi is a former Marine who participated in the 2nd Siege of Fallujah. Today he is on the Board of Directors of the Islah Reparations Project. He is also the Director of the documentary film *Fear Not the Path of Truth: a veteran's journey after Fallujah*. Ross holds an MA in Linguistics and he is working on an MA in English Studies at Fitchburg State University. Read his blog [here](#).

There Are No Grey Areas in Ending Violence Against Women

February 13, 2015

Author, Kourtney Mitchell, was recently elected to the VFP Board of Directors in January.

Hollywood wants us to believe that we can separate the reality of a horribly violent culture from the choices men make on a daily basis affecting the lives of women everywhere. In a world where men assault a third of all women, and commit over 90% of all violent crimes; where a man battering a woman is the most commonly committed crime; and where ever-increasing war and militarism devastates communities on every continent, we can no longer afford to sidestep the hard truths of what it will take to end violence and realize a peaceful world.

Nevertheless, our media, our governments, our law enforcement agencies and corporations continue to perpetuate violence at the expense of all life on the planet. We are supposed to believe that violence is sexy, and that as long as people believe they are making informed choices then it should be beyond public discourse. We have to ask ourselves the obvious question: what does it mean to inundate the dominant culture with the elements of violence, sell it to us as desirable under the capitalist paradigm, and still claim to be contributing to the empowerment of women?

War is an atrocity; it is a crime against humanity, against all life. But there is more than just one war happening in our world. War goes beyond the sickness of militarism, the death and destruction on the battlefield. For thousands of years the hyper-masculine culture has meted out the subjugation of women worldwide. Male-dominated cultures for the large part have failed at achieving true peace and justice. Every generation has suffered through war and repression, and it is women and children who have suffered the most.

As peace activists dedicated to exposing the true costs of war and militarism, it is high time we are honest about the reality of violence in our culture. Speaking and acting against the use of war as an instrument of foreign policy is the bare minimum for socially conscious people. To further the goals of peace, we must begin to include a critique of domination and control at all levels.

Domination and control are among the primary elements of all oppressive institutions. The lies of masculinity teach our young boys and men to use violence to solve problems, and this culture rewards us for such behavior. What results is generation after generation of men socialized to dominate women, children, even the earth. An emphasis on treating others as objects to be used rather than living beings with whom to cultivate equal relationships is part and parcel of training boys to become good soldiers for the war machine. It is no wonder rape and sexual harassment of women are so high in the military. Feminists have been expressing these truths - and dying for them - for longer than men have even had the heart to admit it.

We peace activists have resolved to oppose war and advocate for the reparation of effected communities and to hold the warmongers accountable. We are not hesitant to call out the politicians, corporate executives and military generals who send our women and men to kill and die in the name of profit and imperialism. This resolve must extend to violence against women and children as well, and we cannot be hesitant to call it like it is. Male violence is at the root of the violent culture, and women's struggles against patriarchy must become all of our struggles, or else we risk the same dishonesty of the warmongers themselves. Every two minutes a man batters, rapes or kills a woman. The war is being waged on many fronts, and a comprehensive approach to achieving peace in this world must include a dedication to solidarity with all oppressed communities.

There are no grey areas in the struggle to end violence against women. If we listen to the propaganda of the dominant culture, it will have us making excuses for glamorized violence. If we listen to Hollywood - the same industry that sells war as entertainment, the same industry that works directly with the military to influence public opinion on war - it will have us believing that we can normalize violence in our personal relationships without consequence. We must resist this just as strongly as we resist the war economy. World leaders of every stripe have stated time and time again that ensuring full autonomy and equality of women is how we achieve the highest

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social justice in our societies. We need to start taking this challenge seriously.

As men who benefit from patriarchy, we must begin to question what it means to be men in a violent world. There is more joy, more connection, more sanity in cultivating the positive qualities of peace, love and anti-violence. There is more to life than just being a man. We can emphasize the qualities of being good people, of being good human beings.

I call on all veterans in the peace movement, on all of our allies, to oppose the violence of hyper-masculinized culture and to act in defense of women and children. Let us resist the imposition of sexual violence in our relationships, and become critical of any ideology that justifies subjugation, domination and control. Extend our critique of militarized culture to the hegemonic discourse of violent manhood. Listen to women - hear their stories, their experiences, and their calls for solidarity. The peaceful world will not be achieved until we do so.

Obama Asks Congress to Authorize Another Endless War

President's formal request for authorization of military force slammed as 'worst-case scenario'

By: Sarah Lazare

"Obama has to decide on his legacy," said Phyllis Bennis. "Does he want the legacy that he was the president to end wars, or does he want to be present to make wars endless?" (Photo: White House/flickr/public domain)

President Barack Obama on Wednesday formally asked Congress for expansive authorization of the U.S.-led war on ISIS, including a green-light for open-ended and geographically limitless military operations.

While lawmakers in Washington discuss details of the proposed authorization for use of military force (AUMF), analysts point out that meaningful debate about the war itself has been left completely off the table.

"This shows that Congress is not even debating the issue of force," Phyllis Bennis, senior fellow at Institute for Policy Studies, told Common Dreams. "They are simply debating some small questions of limits or not limits."

Raed Jarrar, expert on Middle East politics and Policy Impact Coordinator for the American Friends Service Committee, told Common Dreams that the text of Obama's proposed AUMF is a "worst case scenario" because it "doesn't place any limitations on war."

"The bottom line is, you cannot bomb extremism out of existence."

—Phyllis Bennis, Institute for Policy Studies Contents of the

President's Proposal

Obama submitted the AUMF despite his controversial claim that he does not, legally, need to put use of military force to a vote.

The key details of the request were shared with Senate Democrats on Tuesday, and the full text was formally submitted on Wednesday. The proposal calls for:

Authorization of three more years of military force, extending the war to the next administration, which could then seek reauthorization.

Permission to deploy troops, with the exception of "enduring offensive ground combat operations." Analysts have pointed out that this vaguely-worded prohibition would likely open the door to significant boots on the ground. "The limits on ground troops are as vague as they were in 2001," said Bennis. "Ground troops are ground troops. Once they are on the ground, you don't always get to choose whether they fight or not."

War against "individuals and organizations fighting for, on behalf of, or alongside [ISIS] or any closely-related successor entity in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners." Similar to the 2001 AUMF, this defines the "enemy" in extremely broad terms.

No geographical limitations.

Repeal of the 2002 AUMF, which authorized the 2003 invasion of Iraq and use of force against Saddam Hussein, but no repeal of the controversial 2001 AUMF, which was passed in the wake of September 11th, 2001 and has been used to justify wars and troops deployments from Afghanistan to Somalia to Ethiopia.

Several key details are omitted from the proposal. They include: Clear definition of military objective and what "winning" looks like.

Discussion of the U.S.-led air war, which, in the past six months, has launched at least 2,361 bombings in Iraq and Syria.

Commitment to transparency regarding civilian deaths, nature of U.S. warfare, and military branches conducting operations.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry released a statement publicly praising the AUMF proposal as "important for our country" and urged Congress to work together on its passage.

"This is truly an authorization for another endless war."

—Raed Jarrar, American Friends Service Committee Representative Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) released a statement on Wednesday in which he applauded the president for the proposal but objected to the lack of limitations. Schiff urged a sunset for the 2001 AUMF (which the president has previously criticized) and expressed concerns over the lack of "geographic limitation and a broad definition of associated forces."





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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 turtldncer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.



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