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THE FOGHORN

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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

MORBID SYMPTOMS” IN PALESTINE

By Jeff Klein, Counterpunch

A few nights ago, in the West Bank city of Nablus, I was awakened by sustained volleys of gunfire near the hotel where I was staying. The Hotel al-Yasmeen, is located in the town’s old al-Qasaba market district – yes, it’s the “Casbah” -- whose narrow streets and alleys had been the scene of frequent armed clashes between various Palestinian resistance groups and Israeli security forces over the years, including other times that I had been visiting.

Disregarding the warnings of the hotel staff, I ventured out into the market to visit with several friends who were shopkeepers in the Qasaba. Everywhere, almost all the food stores, workshops and market stalls were closed and sealed behind the ubiquitous steel shutters that protected them during the night. The market remained nearly deserted as shots continued to ring out sporadically from various directions.

My friends were embarrassed when I asked them what was going on. They assured me , somewhat wearily, that this was not a clash with the Israeli army, but instead the fighting was between two extended Palestinian family networks, the Halawe and the Hamame, who were struggling for influence in the city and competing over “protection money” exacted from the city’s merchant classes. It was an internal bid for power, which was mildly opposed only by a few Palestinian security units. Three Palestinian policemen were said to be wounded in the fighting.

However, the Israeli army, which did not hesitate to invade Nablus at night, in violation of the Oslo Agreement, to confront or arrest Palestinian activists or to seize illegal weapons, stayed out of it entirely. Apparently they regarded armed clashes between Palestinians with benign tolerance.

This sad state of affairs was on my mind at a meeting later that evening with a group of visiting Italian solidarity activists. They were mostly students from formerly “Red” Bologna, but one of the young women proudly introduced herself as coming from Sardinia, birthplace of the famous revolutionary and theorist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci, who spent the last 11 years of his life in Mussolini’s prisons, died in 1937 at the age of only 46. His ashes were later interred in Rome’s non-Catholic (“Protestant”) Cemetery, not far from the graves of the British poets Keats and Shelley.

In prison, Gramsci wrote voluminously, though out of necessity in somewhat veiled “Aesopian” language, and became a source of inspiration to postwar radicals when his Prison Notebooks were posthumously published in the 1950’s.

Among Gramsci’s well-known observations about his own time, which saw the rise of Fascism, is this one:

The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.”

Nothing can better describe the internal situation in Palestine today. (And not just Palestine, of course!)

The political situation is bleak these days on both sides of the former “Green Line.” The old project for an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza has reached a dead end. The Oslo process that began with high hopes more than twenty years ago is thoroughly discredited, along with the Palestinian Authority that was its creation. It is obvious now, as critics like Edward Said wrote at the time of the Oslo Agreement, that no Israeli Zionist parties of the “Left” or the Right were ever prepared to grant true statehood to any Palestinian territory within the Land of Israel. Everyone now understands this, apart from cynical Israeli propagandists and wishful-thinking US politicians.

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As a result, the old leadership and the Palestinian political parties in the Occupied Territories have mostly lost their legitimacy. The activists of the First Intifada generation of the 1980s are exhausted after spending years in Israeli prisons and seeing their hopes for a Palestinian state fade. And despite determined resistance on a local level in some West Bank villages, most of the population – apart from a minority who profit from connections to the Palestinian Authority or the well-funded NGOs -- is hunkered down in the hard daily struggle for survival.

In the largely Arab populated “Triangle” area of central Israel (“1948” as it is referred to by most Palestinians) where I am staying now, crime is also widespread and largely ignored, if not actually encouraged, by the Israeli authorities. The crowded ghetto city of Taibe, with its mean streets and depressed economy, is sometimes jokingly referred to here as Tshikago (“Chicago”) for its high instance of violence and gang murder.

Despite some hopes raised by the joining of the various Palestinian parties in Israel under the United Arab List in the last Knesset elections, Israel’s minority is facing growing repression from the increasingly rightwing Zionist society and government.

Not surprisingly, here as in the rest of the Arab world many are turning to religion in response to the failure of the various liberation and nationalist or socialist projects. More women are covered now, even in the urban centers that were formerly much more secular. Many of the population practice a religious-inspired political quietism or wait for some apocalyptic solution for the existing impasse.

In the Israeli-Palestinian town of Qalansuwe, where I have many friends, the leftist Democratic Front (Hadash in Hebrew, Jabha in Arabic) has lost much of its influence. The mayor of the town is now from the Muslim religious party – and the defiant statue of Salahaddin that once dominated the town square has been taken down as against religion and replaced by an Arabic text: Udhkuru Allah (“Mention God”).

It is from this context of paralysis and despair that the wave of individual suicidal attacks by Palestinian youth has risen. Some have called it the “Knife Intifada.” Israel and its supporters abroad refer to this phenomenon as a new wave of “terror” – even though the targets are overwhelmingly military or police forces of the occupation.

The courage and self-sacrifice of the mostly teenaged attackers, who are frequently executed on the spot by Israeli security forces, is universally recognized by Palestinian society, even if most also mourn the loss of life without any discernible political purpose. Rather than responding to “incitement” by the Palestinian leadership, as Israel charges, the PA is doing its best to frustrate these attacks. In fact, the youthful knife wielders are acting out

of individual despair and their sacrifice expresses a rebuke to the ineffective leadership of their elders as much as anything else.

Nevertheless, in this moment of failure and “morbid symptoms” it is also true that nearly every Palestinian expresses a sure confidence in their eventual success, even if the time frame may be vague or long-delayed. It is hard to find anyone here who accepts that the Zionist project is permanent, at least in its present form -- or that the liberation struggle will ultimately fail.

Here, it’s worth remembering another of Gramsci’s famous aphorisms:

“The challenge of modernity is to live without illusions and without becoming disillusioned ... [what is required, despite] pessimism of the intellect, [is] optimism of the will.”

THE GOLDEN RULE VOYAGE

BY PETER ARONSON

The Golden Rule antinuclear sailboat will be sailing north this summer. From early June through September, she will be plying the waterways of the Great Northwest, making stops in over 30 ports as she continues her mission to sail for a nuclear free world and a peaceful, sustainable future.

Physicians for Social Responsibility is assisting with organizing in both Washington and Oregon. Portland VFP Chapter 72 is helping to plan for the Golden Rule’s presence at the Fleet Week Parade of Ships, June 8, and the Parade of Roses, June 11. Seattle VFP is helping with plans for Fleet Week and the Parade of Ships in Elliott Bay, August 3, and for the Golden Rule crew to participate in Hiroshima Day activities at Green Lake on Saturday, August 6. Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action and friends are planning a Nagasaki Day protest flotilla near the Bangor Trident Submarine Base on Tuesday, August 9.

For more information: <http://www.veteransforpeace.org/pressroom/news/2016/03/11/golden-rule-coming-northwest>

This Trident Submarine Base contains 25% of the US Nuclear arsenal. Next page is Brian Willson’s important piece, “Trident: A Violation” to inform all readers of the importance of Golden Rule’s next journey.



Trident: A Violation

S. Brian Willson

(Trident is a three-pronged spear, the weapon of Poseidon, or Neptune, Greek god of the sea and protector of aquatic life)

The Trident missile is a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM). Each nuclear-powered submarine is capable of carrying up to 24 Trident thermonuclear missiles that are independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV) with a range of 4000 nautical miles. Each of the Trident missiles is capable of carrying up to eight independently targeted nuclear warheads — meaning hydrogen bombs. Doing the math, eight times 24 is 192 warheads on each submarine. Each of these hydrogen bombs/warheads possesses 38 times more destructive power than the Hiroshima bomb. And each Trident submarine in total possesses the collective destructive power of hundreds of Hiroshima bombs indiscriminately murdering millions of civilians. Upon launching, total flight time is 25 minutes or less depending upon the target location. Trident's accuracy and short flight time makes it a first-strike weapon.

Trident missiles are carried by 14 US Navy submarines, with US warheads (8 in Bangor, Washington; 5 in King's Bay, Georgia, and 1 in Portsmouth, Virginia), and 4 Royal Navy Vanguard-class submarines, with British warheads, home ported at the British Navy base, Clyde in Faslane, West Scotland.

One Trident submarine can destroy an entire country. A fleet of Trident submarines is capable of destroying the world. These nuclear weapons threaten us as much as they do the other side. There's nothing more suicidal than a nuclear weapon. Just one use of a Trident threatens to create a global nuclear winter, destroying the capacity for any human life at all to exist.

Use of first-strike weapons such as the Trident are war crimes in violation of the Nuremberg principles which serve as a foundation of international law. The Trident missiles are designed such that each reentry missile with

its hydrogen bomb hones in on an underground missile silo in the targeted country and destroy it — before its missile could be launched.

On July 8, 1996, the International Court of Justice, the highest court of the United Nations, rendered an advisory opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons violates various articles of international law including the Geneva Conventions, the Hague Conventions, the UN Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Further, weapons systems like the Trident violate any sense of reason as its existence and ultimate use assures destruction of much of the world, no matter where one is living. There is no safe place with nuclear weapons. Any sane nation, its leaders, and citizens should understand, the continued manufacture, deployment, and/or use of these weapons is an act of suicide. Therefore if we are sane we should demand, with our bodies if necessary, their immediate dismantlement as a threat to all of humanity, including yours and mine.

S. Brian Willson is a Veteran For Peace living in Portland, Oregon, USA <http://www.brianwillson.com/>

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, May 5th 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.



Seymour Hersh Reacts to Obama's Plan to Send 250 More US Special Ops Troops to Syria

President Obama has announced the deployment of 250 more Special Operations troops to Syria in a move that nearly doubles the US presence in the country. This comes just days after the Obama administration announced 217 more troops would be sent to Iraq to help in the fight against the self-proclaimed Islamic State. As the US expands its presence in Iraq and Syria, we speak with the legendary investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who has just published a new book titled *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*. In the introduction, Hersh writes: "It's now evident, fifteen years after the 9/11 attacks, that Obama's foreign policy has maintained many of the core elements of the Global War on Terror initiated by his predecessor -- assassinations, drone attacks, heavy reliance on special forces, covert operations and, in the case of Afghanistan, the continued use of American ground forces in combat. And, as in the years of Bush and Cheney, there has been no progress, let alone victory, in the fight against terrorism."

TRANSCRIPT

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

AMY GOODMAN: We're on a 100-city tour marking Democracy Now!'s 20th anniversary. Today, we're broadcasting from the Roundhouse, the Santa Fe, New Mexico, Legislature, here in Santa Fe.

President Obama has announced the deployment of 250 more Special Operations troops to Syria in a move that nearly doubles the US presence in Syria. This comes just days after the Obama administration announced 217 more troops would be sent to Iraq to help in the fight against ISIS. Earlier today, President Obama addressed the wars in Syria and Iraq during a speech in Germany.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: Right now, the most urgent threat to our nations is ISIL. And that's why

we're united in our determination to destroy it. And all 28 NATO allies are contributing to our coalition, whether it's striking ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq, or supporting the air campaign or training local forces in Iraq or providing critical humanitarian aid. And we continue to make progress, pushing ISIL back from territory that it controlled.

And just as I've approved additional support for Iraqi forces against ISIL, I've decided to increase US support for local forces fighting ISIL in Syria. A small number of American Special Operations forces are already on the ground in Syria, and their expertise has been critical as local forces have driven ISIL out of key areas. So, given the success, I've approved the deployment of up to 250 additional US personnel in Syria, including special forces, to keep up this momentum. They're not going to be leading the fight on the ground, but they will be essential in providing the training and assisting local forces as they continue to drive ISIL back.

AMY GOODMAN: As the US expands its presence in Iraq and Syria, we turn to the legendary investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who won the Pulitzer Prize for exposing the 1968 My Lai Massacre in Vietnam, when US forces killed hundreds of civilians. In 2004, Sy Hersh broke the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal. He has just published a new book titled *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*. In the introduction, Hersh writes, quote, "It's now evident, fifteen years after the 9/11 attacks, that Obama's foreign policy has maintained many of the core elements of the Global War on Terror initiated by his predecessor -- assassinations, drone attacks, heavy reliance on special forces, covert operations and, in the case of Afghanistan, the continued use of American ground forces in combat. And, as in the years of Bush and Cheney, there has been no progress, let alone victory, in the fight against terrorism."

Seymour Hersh, it's great to have you back on Democracy Now! Congratulations on your book. Why don't we start by talking about what President Obama announced in his speech in Germany today, just hours before this broadcast: increased troop presence in Syria. What does it mean?

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SEYMOUR HERSH: First, happy anniversary. Glad you're still around, kiddo.

AMY GOODMAN: Thank you.

SEYMOUR HERSH: Well, one of the words he doesn't mention is Russia. Look, I can't begin to tell you what's in his mind. It's a little amazing at this stage he's putting more forces in, but that's -- you know, that's his prerogative, I guess, as president. Always makes good news. Nobody ever -- nobody seems in this country ever to object too much when we put more people on the ground.

But the real winner in the last year or so of the war there has been the Russians. And the Russians -- the bombing was much more effective. If you remember, the president had said publicly, when Putin decided to put his air force hard at work there, he said it would be a quagmire, they wouldn't be able to get out, it's going to be, you know, schadenfreude -- it would be like what happened to us in Afghanistan, and is happening to us, and certainly did happen to us in Vietnam. But they did it. They came in, and they did very well.

I will tell you right now, Russian special forces are in the fight against ISIS with the Syrian army, with Hezbollah, with the Iranian army, the Quds Force. And the Russians have done an awful lot to improve the Syrian army in the past year -- retrained them, reoutfitted them, etc., etc., etc. It's a much better army since the Russians came in. The fighting in Palmyra that the Syrian army and the Russian special forces did was much bloodier. ISIS fought to the death. It was a terrible toll on everybody, but it was a victory for the Syrian army. We know all these things. The Syrian army is much better. It's probably going to -- probably -- we don't know. I don't know. Nobody knows. It will probably take Raqqa, the former capital city, if you will, ad hoc capital city of ISIS. ISIS is on the run, particularly in Syria, not necessarily in Iraq.

And I just don't understand what the president is doing, why he wants to engage more. But, you know, it's not my call. I would also -- I've been told there are many more forces in Iraq than we're publicly announcing, including even some elements of one of our airborne divisions. What the hell? As usual, we don't really know what the

game plan is. I do not understand why he's decided to jump into a war that was being run by -- it's being won right now by the Syrian army and its allies, including Russia. I just -- I can just speculate that our anti-Putin, anti-Russian instinct in America continues apace. That's all.

AMY GOODMAN: In your introduction to your new book, *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*, you write, "In a review of my interviews about Obama's early decision to raise the ante in Afghanistan, one fact stood out: Obama's faith in the world of special operations and in Stanley McChrystal, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan who worked closely with Dick Cheney from 2003 to 2008 as director of [JSOC] the Joint Special Operations Command." Seymour Hersh, can you elaborate on this?

SEYMOUR HERSH: Well, it's amazing. Look, you win the presidency -- hope and peace, or whatever it was -- and you discover, because of -- you know, you don't have the power you might dream you would have. You can't get a lot of things done, because you've got a very hostile Congress. And so -- and presidents, inevitably, in frustration -- look, I've been in this town since the '60s. There's nothing more wonderful for a president -- you can feel more like a president by taking a walk with somebody from the Special Operations community or, earlier, the CIA in the Rose Garden, and getting rid of somebody you don't like, whether you're -- in the case of -- what we do now is we do targeted assassinations. Earlier, I think we just moved them out of office or did operations, you know, political operations. But now it's really just, you know, we hit people. You know, there's a weekly meeting in which they go through names of people to target, assassinate, including, in some cases, an American, without any due process. It's been a wonderful movement. I don't mean to be too sarcastic about it, but what -- you know, this guy ended up in the same place in far too many times, as you read and as I wrote, as Bush and Cheney were.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you explain what these Special Ops forces are doing, both in Iraq and Syria?

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SEYMOUR HERSH: I really don't know. I mean, I know what I'm told, but I just don't know what the truth is. Clearly, they're going to be engaged more. They're helping to plan operations. But I -- we're great at -- we do a lot of dirty tricks in the world. You know, we were inside Iran in the first decade of this year, when the -- before the Iranians began to talk seriously about getting rid of their nuclear weapons, that don't exist, that never did exist. We were doing operations inside the Iranian -- the borders, and also we even went inside Tehran with surrogates. I mean, yes, we went inside Tehran. We did monitoring for nuclear activity, etc., etc. So we've been deeply involved in that world in covert operations. And how much first-hand stuff, I don't really have. I haven't actually talked to somebody who was in Tehran, but we were doing a lot of stuff, including working with people who were doing stuff like blowing up mosques and trying to whack Iranian scientists. So I assume -- one target I do know, the president has designated, is he really wants to take out Mr. Baghdadi, the head of ISIS. He's been a high-priority assassination target for more than a year. We could be doing something like that.

But we're certainly working with the -- there's not much you can do in Iraq, because the Iraqi army -- you know, it's the usual story: They're going to run away. We've been -- one of the great classic lies of America is, every year, some two-star general who's involved with training either the Afghans or, in earlier years, the Vietnam -- Vietnamese, or the Iraqi army, they come before Congress. And the two-star looks them in the eye. He's the general in charge of training, and his promotion depends on not so much what he does, but what he says, I guess, at this point. And he tells the Congress how wonderful it's going on, we've got x number of divisions ready to fight. And the congresspeople all nod. It's a little parody that goes on. And, of course, the armies cut and run, and they're no good, and they haven't been. And the Iraqi army we have right now, that we're talking so wonderfully about, is not going to go near Mosul. It's going to be hand-to-hand fighting. If we ever do go into Mosul, we're going to [inaudible]. So, there you are. You know, I --

AMY GOODMAN: Were you --

SEYMOUR HERSH: Yes, I'm sorry.

AMY GOODMAN: Sy, were you surprised by President Obama's announcement today in Germany?

SEYMOUR HERSH: Horrified. I just don't think it's the way to go. I think it's just putting us into -- you know, as you mentioned in your introduction, we've been doing this war against terror, against an idea, since after 9/11, you know? And how are we doing, fellas? How's it going there? You know, has the amount of opposition to us spread? Has the hatred of America grown more intense? We are truly a very much hated country in the Middle East. And it's partly because of the way we fight our wars -- with drone attacks and a lot of force, the prisons that we did. And Abu Ghraib was just one of many prisons. And a lot of killing goes on by us, you know.

And here's how things have changed, for me, anyway. I'm writing the same kind of stories now about this president, very critical stories, because, you know, somebody has to hold him to -- you know, at least based on what I think is as good as evidence I've ever had in all the stories I wrote for The New York Times in the '70s. I was there for six, seven, eight years as a sort of a hotshot there in the Washington bureau. And I wrote a lot of stories, won a lot of prizes, going after the president, going after wars, going after Kissinger, writing about illegal activities. And all of a sudden, the same stories, still anonymous -- I mean, I wrote them anonymously then, and I'm writing them anonymously now. And some of the people I knew then, believe it or not, are still operating now. And it's like, we can't do that. It's like the American press has moved to the right, as many elements in this country, as you see, when the Sanders case has moved to the left. It's a much more outspoken opposition to some of the things we -- the way we run campaigns. And underneath that is -- of those people who support Sanders, also really dislike much more intensely the wars that are going on and the lies that are being told. But, you know, times have changed.

AMY GOODMAN: Sy Hersh, we're going to break and then come back to this discussion. We're speaking



to Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh for the hour today. He has a new book out; it's called *The Killing of Osama bin Laden*. We're going to also talk about that, the latest in what's known about the killing of bin Laden in Pakistan, the Saudi government's support for him in hiding there, what the US knew, as well as many other issues. This is Democracy Now! We'll be back in a minute.

Islamic State, which will eventually lead the fight to retake Raqqa, the terrorist group's Syrian stronghold. But in order to hold ground in the Sunni Arab-dominated area around the city, and to assuage Turkish fears of a more powerful

Kurdish force on its southern flank, Washington needs more Arab trigger pullers.

Scene 2. In the interest of splitting hairs, President Barack Obama told the BBC Sunday, "it would be a mistake for the United States, or Great Britain, to send in ground troops and overthrow the Assad regime." (Groups in northern Syria win American support in part by promising only to fight ISIS.) "In order for us to solve the long-term problems in Syria, military solution alone — and certainly us deploying ground troops — is not going to bring that about," Obama said.

Scene 3. On Friday, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford awarded Purple Heart medals to four Marines wounded last month in Iraq when their secret firebase south of Mosul was attacked by the Islamic State. The rocket attack killed Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Louis Cardin and forced the Pentagon to admit that 200 Marines had been sent to the remote base to support Iraqi forces fighting ISIS.

Scene 4. During Dunford's visit to a training center just outside Baghdad, he and his staff watched as Iraqi pilots flying two Russian-made Su-25 fighter jets bombed an ISIS warehouse where the group was building car bombs. But the bombs missed. "The analysts watched on the screens as the suspected militants ran outside and fled to a nearby palm grove, where they disappeared. Lt. Col. Jeff McCormack, a Marine in the operation center, said he wasn't surprised. "Unfortunately, it happens more times than not with the Su-25s," he said. "The Iraqis don't always pull it off."

Kurds looking for more. Last August, not far from where the Marines are stationed today, ISIS attacked Kurdish forces with artillery shells containing mustard gas. Since then, the terror group has occasionally lobbed chemical-weapons-laced shells at Kurd fighters and civilians, injuring hundreds and killing one 3-year-old child in Taza in March, according to regional authorities.

FP's Dan DeLuce spoke with Kurdish officials, members of Congress, and the Pentagon to find out what's up with thousands of gas masks Washington promised the Kurds, who say they need tens of thousands of masks for the 65,000 troops that are deployed in the fight against the Islamic State. "So far, the Kurdish forces have 6,000 gas masks, including about 4,000 from the United States for two brigades being trained by American military advisers, said Brig. Gen. Hazhar Ismail of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces. But the United States has promised an additional 5,000 masks and it's not clear when those will be delivered, the general told Foreign Policy in an email."

Welcome to Monday's Situation Report, where I'm filling in for Paul as he takes a well-deserved day off. Don't worry; he'll be back in the saddle tomorrow. As always, if you have any thoughts, announcements, tips, or national security-related events to share, please pass them along to SitRep HQ. Best way is to send them to: paul.mcleary@foreignpolicy.com or on Twitter: @paulmcleary or @arawnsley.

**Man is the most insane species.
He worships an invisible God,
and slaughters a visible na-
ture....without realizing that
the nature he slaughters is the
invisible God he worships...**
Hubert Reeves





**Veterans For Peace
Chapter 56**

Phone 707-826-7124

Email: VFP56@aol.com

WE'RE ON THE WEB:

<http://www.vfp56.org>

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

**Rob Hepburn, Steve Stamnes
Steve Sottong, Jim Sorter,
John Schaefer, Peter Aronson,
Ernie Behm**

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Jim Sorter

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