



VETERANS FOR PEACE NEWS

MINNESOTA VETERANS FOR PEACE, CHAPTER 27

Veterans For Peace News is published quarterly by Minnesota Veterans For Peace, Chapter 27.

Veterans For Peace works to increase awareness of the costs of war, restrain government from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations, end the arms race, reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, seek justice for veterans and victims of war, and abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

We pledge to use democratic and nonviolent means to achieve our purpose.

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"There won't be any trumpets blowing come the Judgement Day — on the bloody morning after, one tin soldier rides away..."
(Potter & Lambert)



Vets for Peace marching to the Fort Benning gates on Sunday, Nov. 22.

VFP #27 Supports 25th Anniversary of SOA Watch

by Mary McNellis

On November 20th 37 intrepid pilgrims boarded a VFP-sponsored coach from Minneapolis to Fort Benning. Their purpose was to participate in the 25th annual School of Americas Watch (SOAW) gathering, taking a stand for justice and accountability, joining torture survivors, union workers, religious communities, musicians, puppetistas, students, migrants, veterans and others from across the country to speak out against violence and militarization.

This year's vigil was a bittersweet gathering, possibly the last at Fort Benning. It was announced that next year's vigil will be held at the Mexican border, in either El Paso TX, Nogales AZ, or Tijuana. Reasons for this move include the need to show solidarity with the increase in undocumented immigrants being driven to the U.S. borders due to U.S. foreign policy making life untenable in their home lands.

The Minnesota entourage included 12 St.

Joseph Workers, students from St. Catherine's and Winona's St. Mary's universities, nuns from South Dakota and a mix of others, some who have ridden the bus for years and some for the first time. Due to the unfortunate absence of Wayne Wittman (who has attended the SOAW vigil 23 times), VFP member Barry Reisch picked up the leadership reins, taking advantage of a captive audience for the 20-hour trip to commandeer the bus microphone and screen videos related to issues such as U.S. tax dollars funding training on U.S. soil (at Fort Benning) of foreign troops in methods of "counter insurgency, torture and murder." Father Roy Bourgeois announced that SOA/WHINSEC is now also training U.S. border guards in these inhumane methods, another incentive to "follow them to the border."

Arriving in Columbus, GA at 7:30 Saturday morning, the bus only stopped long enough for breakfast, continuing on to

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Local members Mary McNellis, Barry Riesch and Dave Logsdon.

Lumpkin, GA where we rallied and marched from the town square to the gates of Stewart Detention Center. Stewart is one of the largest (and most inhumane) private immigrant prisons in the country, built by the same system of racism and violence that gave rise to the SOA/WHINSEC.

The march to Stewart was led by those whose lives are directly impacted by our country's unjust, inhumane and racist immigration policies. A diverse group of more than 1,000 activists marched (more than the total population of Lumpkin), with many young people providing tremendous energy with chants like "El pueblo unidos, jamas seras vencidos." (Translation: "The people united will never be defeated.")

Not returning to Columbus until 3:30 p.m., the bus riders enjoyed only a few hours of comfort in their hotel rooms before heading across the street to the Columbus Convention Center. There, workshops, meetings and speakers contributed to the gathering, building power, analysis, networking and relationships. Vets for Peace had their annual meeting, attended by over 50 members. Our local chapter funded one of the many tables featuring products and information. The evening concluded with a concert by musicians from across the Americas.

On Sunday morning we boarded the bus at 7:30 and went to the annual VFP peace march to Fort Benning gates. Chilly, but sunny, it started out with 50 and snowballed to 150 people as the march neared the gates.

On stage, just in front of the gates, our local president,

Dave Logsdon, opened the day's program, explaining why we ring bells. He then rang a bell 11 times. For several hours we were educated and entertained by speakers and musicians, honored by an indigenous blessing and recited nonviolence guidelines before beginning the solemn funeral procession to commemorate the victims of SOAW/WHINSEC violence.

Former National VFP President Patrick McCann summed it up well: "The Sunday stage show is always awesome! VFP and the movement in general can learn much from the creativity that program always generates. There is reporting of numerous places where the U.S. is troubling the waters, each succinct report followed by 'No mas, no more, we must stop the dirty war; *companeros, companeras*, we cry out, *no mas no more.*'" A solemn funeral procession follows as we hear the names of hundreds of people killed at the hands of U.S. sponsored terrorists. The crowd responds 'Presente' to each name, and the enormity of the situation never fails to wash over the crowd as we proceed through the litany of names, like "Maria Rodriguez, two years old."

It is a powerful and sobering experience, bearing witness to this on-going human tragedy. The procession, led by Father Bourgeois, culminated at the chain-link fence that

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Beyond the choir Our Members in the community

Dick Foley spoke to several classes at Cretin Derham Hall H.S. Al Bostelman, Dave Logsdon, Amy Blumenshine, and Steve McKeown met with Seminary Students regarding the military from Bethel Lutheran. Our chapter gave a Kellogg-Briand Banner to the Seattle chapter, which presented it to the Kellogg Middle School in Shoreline, WA at a school assembly for Armistice Day. Roy Wolff was on a panel discussion at the *Beyond the Divide* film. Larry Johnson spoke to classes totaling over 400 students that he helped bring to the Hiroshima Nagasaki exhibit at the Landmark Center that a number of us volunteered at. We had four Armistice Day events that had some new faces, and had television coverage. We were on five radio programs on KFAI since the last publication. The SOA bus had a number of students, Barry Riesch is now at the JeJu Island military base at a daily protest, etc etc.

Notes from the President

by Dave Logsdon

"We all do better, when we all do better."

Paul Wellstone

What a whirlwind of VFP action in November! The wonderful MAP program at Perpich Arts High, followed by three Armistice Day events! The Landmark center morning program was very well put together by Steve McKeown with some help from wife Joan and Gerald Gannan. I was very proud to be a member of Veterans For Peace!

Our bus trip to the School of the Americas Watch this year came together in a tsunami of last minute bookings. Our deepest thanks for associate member Mary McNellis for her heroic efforts organizing the trip.

We head into the home stretch for 2015 with strong winds and full sails! It appears I will be captaining this ship for 2016 and I am very excited to see what 2016 holds for us. All hands on deck!

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was erected for just the day to prevent people from easily "crossing over" and entering the base. Once here the participants place the cross (or Star of David) they've been carrying (which bears the name, age and country of a victim) into the fence, in honor of that person's martyrdom. "Presente! We remember and honor you!"

After the sadness and solemnity of the funeral procession, the vigil concluded with a *puppetista* pageant to lift our spirits. At about 2 p.m. the 37 Minnesota pilgrims boarded the VFP bus for another 20-hour drive back to Minneapolis, their souls fed, and with a number of BBQ stands nearby, hopefully bodies as well.

This trip seemed blessed and pre-ordained. Besides incredibly nice weather (the bus narrowly escaped a snow storm), the trip this year almost didn't happen. This article would not be complete without mentioning the generosity of many people who contributed money in order to send the bus this year. With barely two weeks to go, on November 8th there were not yet enough passengers to pay for the bus, yet our chapter decided it was so important to send the bus that it would make up any shortfall. After a whirlwind fundraising drive, we were able to raise enough money to pay for the bus and give several scholarships. Here's a huge "thank you" to the many people who contributed: you know who you are!

This war business "Trigger happy"

by Tom Dooley

A Turkish pilot, flying an American made F-16 shot down a 2 seater Russian fighter bomber.

One of the pilots was killed in his parachute, the other was rescued.

One report used the term "trigger happy." It's about time. Cops and soldiers face a series of crises constantly. It's part of the job. They are "crisis oriented."

The Hollywood western popularized the phrase "shoot first, ask questions later." Recent shootings by cops seem to bear this out. A cop's job is EXTREMELY difficult. That's why they get to retire ten years earlier. It's the stress of the job. Makes one wonder why anyone in their right mind would want a job dealing with dead bodies, accident victims, domestics, bar room brawls, drunks, and mentally disturbed people. Cops have power and authority and they love it. It's why some of them become cops. Problem is POWER CORRUPTS.

Much questioning has been done about how the ISIS, the Taliban and others have been able to "radicalize" young men and some young women to join their "Army of Fanatics" to be butchers.

Makes me wonder how the U.S. and others can radicalize tens of thousands of good people to travel half way around the world to kill people in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere who have done nothing to us.

China just announced they are setting up a military base in Djibouti on the Gulf of Aden. How many years will it take for them to equal the number of bases the U.S. has: 200 to 700, depending on who's counting. It took the U.S. 200 years.

Soldiers: Know Your Rights

To Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan: You took an oath to uphold the Constitution, not to support policies that are illegal. The GI Hotline phone number is:

1-800-394-9544

We had a “Bell” of a good time!

by Larry Johnson

Bells into Landmark Center

Last year Landmark Center in St. Paul let us fill their space to hear Captain Paul Chappell, author of *The Art of Waging Peace*. This year they let us move our Nov. 11 Armistice event inside, in conjunction with the significant August 22-November 28 Hiroshima/Nagasaki exhibit, “From War to Reconciliation.” In the exhibit’s welcoming address, Mayor Matsui of Hiroshima said, “Through this exhibition, I want everyone to understand that our *hibakusha*, enduring harsh and painful circumstances, have devoted themselves to calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons with their earnest message that no one should suffer as we have.” One of the peacemakers featured was Takashi Nagal, who wrote *The Bells of Nagasaki*. Nagal was a doctor in Nagasaki who survived the bomb blast. For years he hated Americans and wanted revenge. Then he moved to spending the rest of his life, until he too died of radiation sickness, teaching everyone he met the importance of forgiveness and working for peace.

I also worked several days with a group of educators, taking approximately 400 middle and high school students through the exhibit. I told the story of Sadako and the Thousand Cranes, and rang my Armistice Bell. One of my main points was to counter the argument, “We had to drop the horrendous bombs to save a lot of lives,” which is the main message out in the world, with the lesser known, “It was unnecessary because Japan was ready to surrender.” My point was that people will argue those things forever. As a veteran, I was taught that killing civilians is a war crime. Those bombs killed civilians. They should never have been made.

One Somali student asked, “Can anyone get bombs like that?” That is a scary question, but it was answered by the Ploughshares speakers Steve arranged for November 11. Security is loose at the big nuclear installations; looser still around the smaller applications.

So thanks again to Landmark for allowing us much opportunity to tell many people, young and old, the parts of the nuclear story rarely heard.

Bells Rang as three young people were rewarded for essays on peace

Through our involvement with MAP (Mn Alliance of Peacemakers), we helped institute the First Annual Leslie

Reindl Peace Essay Contest. Three high school students received scholarship awards of \$1000, \$750, and \$500 for the significant learning experience of thinking, researching, and writing on how to achieve peace. When the winners were announced on Nov. 10, in a program at the Perpich Center, the program opened with 11 of us ringing Armistice Bells with this statement:

When the 1918 Armistice was signed, ending World War I at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, bells of joy rang worldwide, as people everywhere committed to work to end warfare.

Twenty-four years ago, Steve McKeown and other VFP Chapter 27 founders, began again ringing a bell 11 times at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, committing all of us to work, as veterans, FOR PEACE.

Eight years ago, we began asking places of worship to join in, ringing tower or handheld bells, 11 times, on or around the sacred time of 11 a.m. on Nov. 11. We know of nearly 200 churches statewide joining in.

Four years ago we rang a bell 11 times at Hennepin County Government Center the evening of Nov. 11. Eleven of us then slept on the Plaza, in freezing weather, taking turns standing guard for the right of young people to occupy for a more just and peaceful community and world.

Three years ago, following a 2008 resolution by Bob Heberle at our national convention, we worked with our national group and “Move to Amend” to promote this remembrance nationwide. Today, over 50 cities in the U.S. hold Nov. 11 Armistice ceremonies, committing to work for peace to end the unnecessary sacrifice of veterans, and the suffering of civilians in warfare.

Two years ago, 11 of us worked with sculptor Gita Ghei on a State Arts Board grant to design and cast our own Armistice Bells for Peace. Some of those personally created bells ring here tonight, calling out a mobilization of young people willing to think, write, and work for a more peaceful world.

The top 3 essays tonight are:

FIRST PLACE *Lauren Wieber of Northfield High, who said, “To attain harmony, conflict is required. Conflict can bring important issues to the surface, and a world in peace and harmony can still contain conflict. Harmony is cooperation, sympathy, and fellowship,*

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North Shore retreat a great success

Submitted by Mary McNellis

On Oct. 2, eight people from VFP #27 showed up at a lovely cabin outside of Two Harbors overlooking Lake Superior. We spent a weekend (self financed) filled with revelry, cooking, eating, hiking and, of course, lots of talking. For a change we had beautiful weather all weekend.

As always we enjoyed good food. Saturday morning we were surprised by the arrival of George Mische and his wife, Helena. Our chapter is blessed with multiple world-class storytellers; George is among them. One of the Cantonsville Nine, he served a three-year term in Lewisburg Federal Prison. George regaled us with details of the draft board raid and his experiences “inside” Lewisburg with Jimmy Hoffa and Philip Berrigan. Hoffa pretty much had the prison staff at his beck and call and had to only snap his fingers and a guard would come running with a cigarette.

Helena spoke of meeting George; she was convinced he was a card-carrying member of the Communist Party. Their first evening together she searched his wallet to confirm this, without the expected results. She spoke of her nurse’s training and alcohol runs to the prison. Supplying alcohol was a way to make friends and had an amazing effect on easing prison race and gang problems.

George had ideas on boosting membership, such as how to attract media attention and taking down as many names/contacts on sign-up sheets as possible at all tabling events, like at the Plymouth Congregational Church and Macalester Plymouth Church Full Disclosure events.

Later that afternoon we hiked through Gooseberry Falls State Park, viewing the falls and hiking down along the shore where the river enters Lake Superior. The weather was perfect, the autumn colors were prime and the crowds accordingly large.

We were fortunate to be joined for dinner on Saturday evening by two members of the Duluth VFP, John Pegg and



Bill Anderson. Discussion topics included risk of water wars on Lake Superior; the Safe House that Greg and Michelle in Duluth are supporting for sex trafficking victims; Veterans for Progress support for rural Vietnamese villages and offer of sponsorships for children; and a film called *Transform Plowshares* that Anderson is making. Pegg spoke of his efforts in Witness for Peace organizing trips to Latin America. We spoke of possible Speaker’s Bureau guests. Duluth’s annual speaker this year was John James Harris, who spoke on “Eternal harvest: Laos and the Legacy of Explosive War Remnants.” They recommend we contact him to speak in the Twin Cities.

Another suggestion was to invite Dick Gregory to speak

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Hours: M-F noon to 7 p.m., Sat. noon to 6 p.m.

WORLD BEYOND WAR

VFP members Leah Bolger, Bruce Gagnon, and Paul Chappell are among the impressive International Speakers Bureau headed up by David Swanson. Very worthy of CHECKING out and SUPPORTING.

www.worldbeyondwar.org/speakers/

A workable world conference

by Mike Madden

Declaring that global problems demand global solutions, the Workable World Trust organized a conference that was held Oct. 8-9 at the Humphrey Institute. With its premise that the current international system is incapable of coping with major threats facing humanity, there was pre-conference skepticism expressed by supporters of the existing United Nations. Skepticism was further heightened by knowledge that several conference speakers and organizers were proponents of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine that was horribly abused by the United States and NATO, which led to regime change in Libya.

But while the latter concern proved to be well-founded, overall the conference was balanced insofar as the podium was given to both defenders of the present UN system and its critics.

Barbara Frey, Director of the Human Rights program at the University of Minnesota, was among the institution's defenders. She noted the first accomplishment of the UN Human Rights Commission: adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. She said that while political pressures often result in half measures, the body has authorized some 40 thematic procedures from disappearances to torture. In 2006, amid criticism that the commission did not treat the violations of all nations equally, it gave way to the UN Human Rights Council which implemented the Universal Periodic Review. All nations are now subject to review of their human rights records and no nation, by adherence to strict rules, has an outsized voice in the procedure.

Charlotte Ku, Professor of Law at Texas A&M University, warned against writing off existing institutions and suggested that the bar of expectation might be set too high. She questioned whether any institution could solve all the world's problems and said that UN General Assembly Resolutions, though non-binding in nature, are valuable for their imprimatur.

The two speakers who favorably mentioned R2P were also among the harshest critics of the UN. Keynote speaker W. Andy Knight, Professor of International Relations at the University of Alberta, labeled it "defective, inefficient, ineffective, and largely irrelevant" all in the same sentence. William Pace, Executive Director of the World Federalist Movement, flatly asserts that "the current UN cannot succeed."

Both speakers also saw fit to level a broadside against

Russia with Mr. Knight insinuating Russian misbehavior was cause for its departure from the G-8, and Mr. Pace alluding to unspecified crimes committed against Georgia in 2008. Mr. Knight did not see fit to mention the precipitating event to the Ukrainian crisis, the U.S. assisted coup that ousted its democratically elected president. Nor did Mr. Pace mention that an independent European investigation found that Georgia, for its unjustified shelling of Tskhinvali, was the aggressor in the 2008 conflict.

Robert C. Johansen, Professor of Political Science and Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, advocated for a 15-30,000 member "UN Emergency Peace Service" (UNEPS). When it was suggested that the last thing the world needs is yet another standing army, he insisted that he was merely proposing "a more effective way to enforce the law using relatively moderate means." Asked what law enforcement tools would be at the disposal of his peace service (hand guns, automatic weapons, armored vehicles, armed drones?), he avoided direct answer.

The world's greatest powers, including the United States, are often the most egregious actors on the world stage. When it was suggested that an armed force of 30,000 members would not be a deterrent to their lawlessness, Professor Johansen concurred saying that was not his intention.

Immediately following this exchange, conference moderator John Trent, who is also the Board Chair of the World Federalist Movement of Canada, offered this rejoinder: "As a non-American, I've always been very fascinated that everyone is always condemning the United States for one thing or another over the years no matter what the government is. And yet it seems to me, as I watch what goes on in the world, every time there's a problem, people look to the United States for leadership and I don't see that leadership coming from anywhere else. . . . It's the United States that picks up the issues first usually, and so I think the rest of us outside should be grateful at least for that."

It is doubtful that people of the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia are so grateful for US leadership.

In fact, a recent global opinion poll found that a majority of people around the world, by a wide margin, consider the United States to be the greatest threat to world peace.

Since 1990, VFP has held NGO (non-governmental organization) status at the UN. In this capacity, it has run a project to bring children injured in the Balkan War to the United States for medical care; it has reported on coercive

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which, with practice, can all be ways to approach and respond to conflict. . . something which can also accentuate and remind us of the beauty of all the different people in the world."

SECOND PLACE *Sophie Salmon Peterson, of Perpich Center for the Arts Education, who said, "People should not fear being on the streets. We need to come together and keep the streets safe for the LGBTQ+ community. We have obtained some justice, with the right to marry. Now, how about some peace?"*

THIRD PLACE *Sophia Morrisette of Southwest High in Mpls, who said, "We need heroes who reach a consensus, rather than beating another side into submission."*

Watch this space and others for information on how to involve young people in your life in this important effort next year.

City of Bells

Steve McKeown and I have begun meeting with a group of Minneapolis church members, working to restore church tower bells and have them ring again. Their idea is for Minneapolis to become known as the City of Bells. We've told them about our bell ringing for peace on November 11, and they've enthusiastically joined in. Many church bells in the past were melted down to be turned into weapons of war. This group is getting behind the idea of restoring those bells, and consciously letting them ring to signal the commitment to work for peace. STAY TUNED.

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on the Vietnam War commemoration. Keith Ellison has suggested a good topic for the Vietnam Commemoration and Anniversary next year would be Kent State, on or around May 4. Michael Orange was suggested as a speaker since he attended Kent State after his Vietnam service. Keith Ellison has offered to publicize and speak at such an event. Steve McKeown said our chapter needs to print a brochure for Speaker's Bureau.

Mary McNellis asked Duluth how they raise funds. They offer a local membership with dues in contrast to VFP #27 sending out a yearly letter asking contributions. There was a discussion about why VFP #27 doesn't have "local" memberships and confusion about who exactly is a "member." Some people think donating money either locally or to National VFP makes them a member, when in fact \$40 has to be submitted to National every year, along with a membership application, in order to be considered an "official, card-carrying" member of VFP.

The issue was raised whether our chapter benefits sufficiently from the money spent on our office rent and tele-

phone/internet to justify this expense. It had been suggested that we survey our members to find out their opinions/priorities. No conclusion was reached. There was discussion on what our chapter's experience was with paid staff. Steve McKeown gave some history on our chapter. There was further discussion on SOAW - should we send a bus this year? John Pegg discussed his involvement with SOAW organizing efforts. We encouraged him to invite people from Duluth to join the VFP #27 bus to SOAW.

We also discussed the Workable World Conference and whether we should sponsor it because of the UN position on R2P (Responsibility to Protect). Dave Logsdon thought we should inform our members of both sides of the issue.

Sunday morning, after a hearty breakfast, we made a circle, gave thanks, sang two peace songs, and rang bells 11 times. We left Two Harbors with food for thought and decisions to be made. We're looking forward to next year's retreat: same place on the first weekend in October. Mark your calendars!

World Conference, from previous page

U.S. recruiting practices; and it has presented at an event hosted by the Iranian Mission in pursuit of peace and disarmament.

VFP is currently seeking to upgrade to consultative sta-

tus. While some reforms are desirable at the UN, most notably the Security Council veto, it is an institution well worth keeping.

A little diplomacy can go a long way

by Jill Troutner

On June 29, 2011, the Huffington Post reported the cost of our current war at \$3.7 trillion and rising. It is December 2015, and the sabers are still rattling. Have we lost the idea of having good relations with other governments or at least good relations with a nation's people? Bombing adversaries "back into the stone age" knocked Curt Lemay out of the 1968 vice presidential race. That idea that was too horrific in 1968 appears to be gaining popularity in 2015.

Humans respond to incentives. Things like sanctions and embargos are punishments. They provide an excuse for failures. Punishments keep people angry and bitter. Sanctions followed by military invasions and the brutal aftermath of destruction lay a groundwork where moral high ground is a fantasy that makes the *Hunger Games* a more easily understood parallel to society today than delving into real world events.

What is the ultimate motive of our foreign policy? Winning the hearts and minds of the people? When we deal with someone who disagrees with us, what is our goal? What are we trying to accomplish? Is the goal to score points, get even, or win the "game?" When did it become a game where "getting even" becomes the goal? Even children understand that getting even is a no-win scenario. The recent *Hunger Games* release has everyone talking about this, and a movie is making the connection where reality is failing. A country song croons that "nobody wins, we both lose, hearts get broken, and love gets bruised." If winning hearts and minds was our goal for the last 10 years, how did we do? If we believe in something, and that something hurts us, is a jerk to us, or damages us, we lose that belief. Changing someone's mind and restoring belief does not happen quickly or easily.

Wars and warriors do not seem to be working. We are not safer. Do we need more warriors? We seem to need more diplomats. **Every dollar we spend on the war**

machine - the training, the safety, the manpower and the technology - should be matched, or better yet, surpassed, to fund the "diplomacy machine." The diplomat needs to be a little bit psychologist, historian, linguist, therapist, strategist, and authentic. That is a big bag of tricks. The Benghazi hearings blatantly showed how overworked, understaffed, and underfunded our foreign diplomats are.

Part of the problem may be the lack of respect for diplomacy, because at least 30 percent of diplomatic positions are used as rewards to the party faithful. The State Department

Diplomacy is a strategy for getting us what we want by helping us understand the other side. That seems like a good investment to make.

is hamstrung by outdated legislation, and big lobbying groups are not helping; fear mongering makes much more money faster

than talk and diplomacy. Today, diplomacy must be characterized by networking that includes diverse levels of coordination and cooperation. Business issues play a critical role. The trend of business playing an expanding role in coordinating foreign policy and in the daily life of diplomacy is shown by the Clinton email from the Benghazi hearing referencing a trade dispute that Rep. Donald Manzullo, an Illinois Republican, had asked Clinton to look into. Resolving the "gefilte fish trade dispute" with Israel led to an unthawing and the opportunity to solve other issues.

The diplomatic mission has become so diverse that the diplomat needs to be an entrepreneur, manager, coordinator, and strategist. Diplomacy is not "some kind of reward for the other side. It is a tool for our side," CIA Analyst Paul Pillar said. Diplomacy is a strategy for getting us what we want by helping us understand the other side. That seems like a good investment to make.

America is falling behind with disastrous effects, both here at home and around the world.

Changing Address?
If you are moving please let us know, so you can receive your newsletter. Even if you leave a forwarding address with the post office, it still may cost us an additional \$ 1.10 each time Thank you

You know, if Congress and President Eisenhower had been honest in their efforts in 1954, they wouldn't have changed Armistice Day to Veteran's Day, they would have called it Cannon Fodder Day.
-Mike Madden

No thanks to “Thank you for your service!”

by Chante Wolf

At first, when thanked, I was glad to be recognized for serving my country. Deep down I am still proud to be a person who is not only willing to protect her homeland from outside invaders, but to help others in need from civil catastrophes and to assist them after horrific storms. I even volunteered to go to the Persian Gulf war, although I must confess it wasn't to “save” anyone other than my younger and married peers with children, from going first. No matter how it turned out, I was still glad to have “sacrificed” myself before my peers.

Today, however, I cringe when I am thanked for my service, because it brings up other events that happened or that I participated in directly and, frankly, I don't want to be thanked for those actions.

It took me almost 20 years to find the words to describe how I feel about my military and wartime service. I believe what we have done with modern warfare is not just an economic money pit, but morally and spiritually corrupt. Going into other countries and instigating, arming, threatening and paying others to start revolutions just so our corporations have access to resources and cheap labor is not my idea of serving my country. The idea of contributing significant things to the world is noble and in many ways makes our country great, but the growing trend of using brilliant brain matter to design, build and use more lethal fire power on other humans makes death our most profitable export.

Today, Middle Eastern people running for cover on a TV screen are tagged ‘terrorists’ and then targeted and obliterated without due course of law. The sickest part is that those drones in the skies are from an invading country over 10,000 miles away. Our country spews all over the air waves its patriotic righteousness based on democratic principles, but then tosses those principles aside so it can continue its racist war crimes against others who never did anything to this country in the first place.

No, I do not want to be thanked for my service because, I never actually served the public, even though they paid for my room, board, meals, medical, dental care, clothing allowances and now my disabilities. No, I do not want to be thanked for my service, because I never actually protected the Constitution for “we the people.” No, I do not want to be thanked for my service because, I never marched with the suffragists, feminists, homosexuals, labor activists,

peace activists or Dr. Martin Luther King trying to make civil rights changes that were listed in the Constitution but only applied to white men.

Seems to me that what I am witnessing today, after 14 years of bombing other countries who never invaded ours, is a massive public denial concerning our nation's very inconvenient historical truths. Liberation equals the stealing of other countries natural resources; spreading democracy is shoving capitalism down other's throats as cruise missiles are aimed at their schoolyards and hospitals; and saving women from being raped by their own country in reality makes them more available to be taken by our own servicemen's ‘service’ desires and twisted humiliation.

No, I do not want to be thanked for my service, because I only served the governmental men who owned me, lock, stock and barrel. No, I do not want to be thanked for my service, because I really served the military men in power over me and who stalked me in the shadows.

Instead, thank me for surviving. Thank me for getting a college education so I could find the words and have the courage to tell my story, trying to prevent others from going through what I did. Thank me for my perseverance to leave the safety of my home to travel through three states to various colleges, universities, churches and high schools so I could share my story and beg others to stop supporting the violent roller coaster we are on.

Actually, I would prefer not to be thanked for anything. I would rather witness a majority of our population showing their own courage, ridding themselves of their hate and begin a healing journey towards a more peaceful world. Of course I am not speaking to or about those who are doing just that and have been for years. The population I am speaking to are the racists, fascists, homophobic, misogynists, and tea coat classists seething and wallowing in their own fear-ridden hate module.

While I am at it, how about the next country our military sets its cross-hairs on, no one shows up for ‘service’ and those elected officials who sit in leather comfort behind the steel fortress of our nation's capital will be forced to have to do their own dirty work or send their own kids instead.

Let's be kind out there, look both ways before crossing the road, hold hands, say “please” and “thank-you.” And remember to laugh, dance and see the wonder in our special world. We all deserve to live in peace, freedom and tranquility and not a life of *The Hunger Games*.

The growing trend of using brilliant brain matter to design, build and use more lethal fire power on other humans makes death our most profitable export.

Full Disclosure: Expanding the official story of Vietnam

by Ron Staff

In a letter to my compatriots both on the wall and the many I met during and after the American war in the country of Vietnam, I said:

I am 71, now. I still think about the war; too often. For long periods of time after my part in the craziness, I could not resist reading any bit of news about whatever latest killing America was doing for whatever given reason, which I expected would be less than useful or kind. My country never failed me in this area. Oh, I was also addressing the latecomers to death, the veterans who offed themselves when their drug of choice stopped working for them or turned on them.

As a journalist (MOS 4312), I was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment south of Danang. Our area of operations (AO) went from there to the Korean Marines south of us and from the beach, inland to Highway #1. More than half of the battalion casualties came from booby traps each month I was there.

On a pre-Christmas operation in 1968 at the south end of our AO, a name was added to the wall. He was a second lieutenant, platoon commander, who was new to the bush. His opportunity to become seasoned ended as he was shot skyward by an exploding 105 artillery round. A booby trap. The company command group wore his body fragments during the rest of that operation. We found his boots with his feet still in them two days later as we moved to close the cordon.

Another lieutenant who was blown up was standing up when he rode an exploding 105 round; so he was able to sire two daughters and to write a best selling book, before (during a relapse) he offed himself. But he's not on this wall.

Then there was the lieutenant in my military occupational specialty, who was in charge of the office in Hue City when it fell during the 1968 Tet Offensive. Eight of his men were executed behind their office and he was walked north through the whole 3rd Marine Division between Hue and the demilitarized zone (DMZ). He came home with the prisoners of war (POWs) long after I got out of the Marine Corps.

To what extent would they have gone to end the vio-

lence, which took their lives too, too early?

Before the war ended, Quaker protestors read their names from casualty lists. They read them on the steps of Congress, only to be arrested. The next day they were back reading their names again and were again arrested. But, there were some Congressmen, who having immunity, continued reading their names. Even read the names of the dead into the Congressional Record. The war didn't miss a beat

Last year I showed my wife around the 1st Marine Division's AO with a Veterans For Peace tour of the country. We took in the titanic, earthen, electric oven, which current US of A funds had constructed to attempt to dispose of the Agent Orange which didn't get sprayed on the crop and woodlands of Vietnam. It had leaked into the soil

where it was carelessly stored at the Danang air base.

Many of the Vietnam veteran stories I've heard echo those of other wars. Such tales are not widely circulated. After all, it is hard to raise a group of heroes-to-be, if they are conscious of these kinds of outcomes resulting from their service and potential sacrifice. All that I read of war was confirmed by my experience in Vietnam. It's pointlessness, cruel, deeply mean-spirited and massively wasteful; plus with nuclear arms on the table, there seems to be a relentless dance with the end time of the whole human endeavor.

Those named on the Vietnam Memorial Wall, have died. I am sorry. I have attempted to "do" my part in ending waring.

When I worked for the Veterans Administration Vet Center Program, I helped oppose the MX Rail Garrison System and the peace community helped stop that military waste. The Department of Defense (DOD) didn't build the ten bunkers for each missile, but they did get the MX missile and the peace makers could be blamed for preventing the construction community from getting DOD funds.

Back when I took the oath of enlistment in Minneapolis on my way to boot camp in San Diego, I swallowed hard saying my name and all the words before, "to uphold and defend the constitution," at which point I had a great sense of "Yes, that I will do." The Marine Corps motto "Semper Fi" (Always Faithful) steers my personal democratic task, still.

All that I read of war was confirmed by my experience in Vietnam. It's pointlessness, cruel, deeply mean spirited and massively wasteful; plus with nuclear arms on the table, there seems to be a relentless dance with the end time of the whole human endeavor.

Full Disclosure, Continued on next page

Minneapolis's Peace Community vs. Portland's

by Ron Staff

Gitmo. New to the language with "Shrub's" administration. Closing it is a high priority of the "current occupant." Somehow, seven years has not been enough for a Harvard man. One is led to wonder if democracy works or has been co-opted by security and the "forces for good?"

We have been told that the prison on Cuban soil has protected us from the worst of the worst. Now we are being told that a certain number of the incarcerated are in fact Cleared-For-Release and that the Harvard man has not been able to find a place that will accept them.

It is reported in the Fall issue of our national newsletter that the Portland, Oregon, chapter (072) "members are part of the coalition working to bring a resolution to the City Council that would welcome cleared for release Guantanamo prisoners to Portland." I'm impressed but also envious. Why should they go to Portland?

Might not Minneapolis be able to find a way to become a welcoming community for at least one of those who have been imprisoned for our "safety."

Perhaps the Portland chapter has started the ball rolling, which like a snowball at the top of a long gentle slope, will grow into a mammoth ball of truth. That truth will finally rip open the curtain of obscurity maintained by our security state that keeps everyone afraid so that we let authorities keep us very safe. Safe from that very terrible enemy they

Full Disclosure, from previous page

Our dead veterans' downpayment was exceeded by the Vietnamese in the numbers of lives lost. But, both are all part of the terrible waste of un-lived lives. Only a small divot in the whole human endeavor, but they could possibly become a critical check point to ending the whole insane war business. What a nice memorial that would be for all of them.

I salute your loss, with a heavy heart. And remain ever faithful to your sacrifice.

have imprisoned in Gitmo; out of sight, out of mind.

Congress recently passed a law making it illegal to house or host prisoners, who are "Cleared-For-Release," in the "Homeland." Our country. What does this "Cleared-For-Release" mean? Does it suggest that they never did anything wrong. That they might have just been in the wrong place at the wrong time? Sort of like the dead Vietnamese, who our Phoenix Program learned were Viet Cong from "reliable sources" during the American war in Vietnam?

*Those flown to Guantanamo became part
of the forces of evil arrayed against us, now
safely under lock and key in Gitmo.
Once locked up, they could not be released,
especially if they were not guilty.*

I wonder how much our Counter Intelligence Agency paid for each "Taliban Enemy" brought in by "friendly forces." You don't suppose that word of that amount got out to encourage folks to bring in someone who was not family, tribe or known to them. Some stranger who happened to have shown up at the wrong time (for him). A number of these sorts of "enemy" did "conveniently" die in a shipping container when someone forgot to open an air hole early in that conflict. Which was reported. Once.

Those flown to Guantanamo became part of the forces of evil arrayed against us, now safely under lock and key in Gitmo. Once locked up, they could not be released, especially if they were not guilty. People might begin to wonder about the superiority of our protectors.

This calls to mind the book by a former director of the National Security Agency about problems with our national intelligence. I am sure that he is a very bright person. One does not rise in a bureaucracy through stupidity. However, when William E. Odom entitled his book *Fixing Intelligence*, one must wonder about his editor, his publisher and anyone who might have read it before it was printed. Afterall, what's new about that? Can you say, "Ironic?"

An inflexible mind comes to mind. Once an enemy; always an enemy. A person who happened to be turned in as an enemy must be one by definition. Now, more than a decade later, he probably is. Bureaucracies don't know what to do with "oops." Mercy and seeking forgiveness are not in their play book.

If we want to run a democracy, we might do well to attend to learning how to, as a society, seek to right the wrongs we do. Do you think our society can mature? Here's a place to begin.

VFP Canoe Builder Extraordinaire Retires

by Barry Riesch

As many of you know VFP Chapter 27 has been raffling off a cedar strip canoe for the past 20 years. Many of those canoes have been works of art created and built by Bob Barron, an Air Force Veteran from 1950-54.

Bob, a Hastings resident, started building canoes in 1980, and as of this writing has built 82. Needless to say, he has become a very skilled canoe builder.

But now, due to age issues, Bob has decided he is no longer able to build our yearly canoe. His skills will be sorely missed and very hard to replace. Many hours



are involved in hand building a cedar stripper, and Bob has always been very generous in the amount he has charged us for the canoes. Our thanks go out to Bob for his great service to our organization.

Each year we decide whether to continue with the canoe raffle, as it is fairly labor intensive, but we have always ultimately decided that the benefits of outreach and funds generated are too great not to.

We are now in the process of searching for another canoe builder. If you know of anyone please send word on. Also we continue to seek your help in helping at the canoe raffle events.

Mayor Hodges writes to the Vatican

This is the text of a letter sent to the Vatican about VFP's Kellogg-Briand banner.

Dear Msgr. Sánchez,

Thank you again for the invitation from His Holiness, Pope Francis to participate in the remarkable "Climate Change and Modern Slavery" symposium at the Vatican in July. It was an extraordinary opportunity to learn from mayors from around the world and to advance significantly the ideas and agenda of sustainable development. As a result of the pledges I signed there, I also joined fellow mayors in New York in September to endorse once again the Sustainable Development Goals and the Under 2 MOU climate agreement.

When I traveled to the Vatican, I was unable to present to His Holiness a banner that a local group in Minneapolis called Veterans for Peace asked me to present to him at that time. It is a copy of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the 1928 international agreement signed by scores of nations, that renounces the use of war to resolve conflict.

It remains in effect today.

Then-U.S. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, after whom the pact is named, is the only person from my home state of Minnesota ever to have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

I have enclosed the banner and a letter from Veterans For Peace in the hopes that you will be able to present it to His Holiness on behalf of Veterans for Peace. Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Once again, please accept my thanks to you, your remarkable staff, and the Holy Father for the opportunity to participate in the symposium and be part of this global movement. I remain extremely grateful.

I am at Pope Francis' service in the fight against climate change and human slavery. Please do not hesitate to call upon me again. I look forward to our continued collaboration.

Sincerely,
Mayor Betsy Hodges

Veterans Day Is Not for Veterans

by David Swanson

John Ketwig was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1966 and sent to Vietnam for a year. I sat down with him this week to talk about it.

"My read on the whole thing," he said, "if you talk to guys who've been to Iraq and Afghanistan and look at what really happened in Vietnam, you run into what I call the American way of waging war. A young guy goes into the service with the idea you're going to help the Vietnamese or Afghan or Iraqi people. You get off the plane and the bus, and the first thing you notice is wire mesh in the windows so grenades can't come in. You immediately run into the MGR (mere gook rule). The people don't count. Kill em all, let the dogs sort em out. You're not there to help the poor people in any way. You're not sure what you are there for, but it's not for that."

Ketwig didn't focus on speaking out or protesting when he returned from Vietnam. He kept fairly quiet for about a decade. Then the time came, and among other things, he published a powerful account of his experience called *And a Hard Rain Fell: A GI's True Story of the War in Vietnam*. "I had seen body bags," he wrote, "and coffins stacked like cordwood, had seen American boys hanging lifeless on barbed wire, spilling over the sides of dump trucks, dragging behind an APC like tin cans behind a wedding party bumper. I had seen a legless man's blood drip off a stretcher to the hospital floor and a napalmed child's haunting eyes."

Ketwig's fellow soldiers, living in rat-infested tents surrounded by mud and explosions, almost universally saw no

possible excuse for what they were doing and wanted to return home as soon as possible. "FTA" (f--- the Army) was scrawled on equipment everywhere, and fragging (troops killing officers) was spreading.

It's hard to say which is more irrational, the world of those actually fighting a war, or the thinking of those creating and prolonging the war. President Bush Senior says he was so bored after ending the Gulf War that he considered quitting. President Franklin Roosevelt was described by the prime minister of Australia as jealous of Winston Churchill until Pearl Harbor. President Kennedy told Gore Vidal that without the U.S. Civil War, President Lincoln would have been just another railroad lawyer. George W. Bush's biographer, and Bush's own public comments in a primary debate, make clear that he wanted a war, not just before 9/11, but before he was selected for the White House by the Supreme Court. Teddy Roosevelt summed up the presidential spirit, the spirit of those whom Veterans Day truly serves, when he remarked, "I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one."

Following the Korean War, the U.S. government changed Armistice Day, still known as Remembrance Day in some countries, into Veterans Day, and it morphed from a day to encourage the end of war into a day to glorify war participation. "It was originally a day to celebrate peace," says Ketwig. "That doesn't exist anymore. The militarization of America is why I'm angry and bitter." Ketwig says his anger is growing, not diminishing.

This article was reprinted from the author's website with permission.

What is the point of honoring Armistice Day ?

by Steve McKeown

The point is in service of the truth. The day itself has become one where our country becomes mob-like to pay tribute usually to themselves, and their promotion of the good veteran who most encompasses what they imagine a WWII vet is.

When WWII veteran Raymond Weeks from Birmingham, Alabama, petitioned then General Eisenhower in 1945 to change Armistice Day to Veterans Day he claimed that it was to honor all veterans. This didn't say a lot for those who fought in the war to end war. In our Armistice Day ceremony at the Landmark Center (it is on video on our chapter website thanks to Andrew Henderson, Gerald Gannan, and Greg Hagen) a reading from Kurt

Vonnegut that was read by Roy Wolff said "Armistice Day is sacred, Veterans Day is not" is in the service of the truth.

But the day isn't even about Veterans so much as it is about the military ethos. At our ceremony one of the speakers from the Duluth/Superior VFP chapter and member of the Transform Now Plowshares trio, Greg Boertje-Obed said it was his military experience that has led him to his disarmament actions. If we are to honor Armistice Day in its sacredness, I believe that heeding what Greg and our other speaker, his wife Michele, have said relates more to this than the dead man's eyes vision of flyovers, glad-handing, and 21-gun-volleys. Armistice Day has been crucified. We are practicing the Resurrection, and that is what Caesar is afraid of.

The Peace Index

Pentagon budget increases \$25 billion

by Frank Fuller

The Pentagon budget for national defense will go up about \$25 billion next year, from \$585.3 billion in 2015 to \$620.9 billion in 2016. This provides funds for the base budget (salaries, weapons, R&D, etc.), Overseas Contingency Operations (all our wars) and the nuclear weapons programs. This amount does not include some high-budget items like the V.A. system or the nation's many spy agencies.

And, of course, since next year is an election year and politicians on the campaign trail are fear mongering like never before, the budget will probably increase even more in the next few years.

But what if the budget had remained the same. What would \$25 billion buy that we can't seem to afford?

Youth Programs. In Minnesota, Youth Intervention Program Grants are funds to "provide ongoing stable funding source to community based early intervention programs for youth experiencing persona, familial, school, legal or chemical problemsl." The Minnesota Legislature provided \$15 million this year for this program. It serves 85 youth programs statewide, ranging from the Minneapolis Urban League to the Blue Earth County Community Corrections. \$25 billion would fund this modest program for 1,666 years.

Two high speed trains. Occasionally someone proposes high speed rail for the U.S., and here these proposals are usually lines between the Twin Cities and Rochester or between the Twin Cities and Chicago. A high speed line from St. Paul to Rochester that could travel 220 miles an

hour was recently suggested and it would cost \$6.6 billion. A high speed line from the Twin Cities to Chicago via Rochester that travelled 185 m.p.h. would cost about \$9 billion. \$25 billion would pay for these two trains with some money left over to fund a third line.

More doctors and nurses. Some experts estimate that, because of an aging population and aging medical personnel, the country will face a shortage of 90,000 doctors and 2-300,000 nurses over the next 10 years. Much of this problem is due to the high costs of education. Doctors are now leaving school with an average of \$150,000 in debt and to pay that off go into higher paying specialties. And there are fewer nurses because of a shortage of nursing teachers. In addition, residency programs for training doctors are expensive. In 2012, Medicare and Medicaid contributed \$15 billion to residency programs in teaching hospitals while it cost the teaching hospitals more than \$27 billion to treat those patients. \$25 billion would just about cover the costs of training residents. Or it could pay to train enough doctors to take care of an aging population. Or it could pay for teachers to train nurses.

A better government? In 2012 the presidential election cost \$7 billion. House and Senate races cost about \$440 million. Those are probably conservative amounts because outside groups no longer have to reveal what they spend. But \$25 billion earmarked for public funding of national elections just might be what we need: a government that actually listens to citizens rather than lobbyists.

Iron by Carl Sandberg

Guns,
Long, steel guns,
Pointed from the war ships
In the name of the war god.
Straight, shining, polished guns,
Clambered over with jackies in white blouses,
Glory of tan faces, tousled hair, white teeth,
Laughing lithe jackies in white blouses,
Sitting on the guns singing war songs, war chanties.

Shovels,
Broad, iron shovels,
Scooping out oblong vaults,
Loosening turf and leveling sod.

I ask you
To witness--
The shovel is brother to the gun.

Movie and Book Review: *Testament of Youth/Chronicle of Youth*

by Joan Johnson

Testament of Youth was showing in July at the Edina Theater, and after I reluctantly agreed to accompany my husband there (I don't normally like to watch war movies), a moving story unfolded.

The movie is based on a book entitled *Chronicle of Youth* by Vera Brittain, whose memoir describes in vivid and very intimate detail her experiences, feelings, perceptions and beliefs during and after the First World War.

She suspended her studies at Oxford to become a Red Cross nurse and care for soldiers who were seriously wounded, and she watched many of them die. This experience, along with losing those nearest and dearest to her, definitely changed her view of war. Her fiancé Roland, a British captain in the trenches of France, sent regular letters to her. I can't help but wonder how much this September 14, 1915, letter to Vera impacted her changing views.

Roland wrote: "This afternoon I am very sleepy – almost too sleepy to write. It is partly the warm weather and chiefly perhaps not getting more than 4 hours' sleep at night and being too busy to get any rest in the day. I have been rushing around since 4 a.m., superintending the building of dug-outs, drawing up plans for the draining of trenches, doing a little digging myself as a relaxation, and accidentally coming across dead Germans while looting timber from what was once a German fire trench. This latter was captured by the French not so long ago and is pitted with shell-holes each big enough to bury a horse or two in. The dug-outs have been nearly all blown in, the wire entanglements are a wreck, and in among (this) chaos of twisted iron and splintered timber and shapeless earth are the fleshless, blackened bones of simple men who poured out their red,

sweet wine of youth unknowing, for nothing more tangible than Honour or their Country's Glory or another's Lust of power. Let him who thinks that War is a glorious golden thing, who loves to roll forth stirring words of exhortation, invoking Honour and Praise and Valour and Love of Country with as thoughtless and fervid a faith as inspired the priests of Baal to call on their own slumbering deity, let him look at a little pile of sodden grey rags that cover half a skull and a shin bone and what might have been its ribs, or at this skeleton lying on its side, resting half-crouching as it fell, supported on one arm, perfect but that it is headless, and with the tattered clothing still draped around it; and let him realize how grand and glorious a thing it is to have distilled all Youth and Joy and Life into a fetid heap of hideous putrescence.

Who is there who has known and seen who can say that Victory is worth the death of even one of these?"

I was left speechless after the movie, and I can't put the book down. I have been moved to tears often. I recommend your checking out both the movie and the book.

The Book: Chronicle of Youth: The War Diary 1913-1917 by Vera Brittain, William Morrow and Co., Inc., New York, 1982. The Movie: "Testament of Youth," Directed by James Kent, Written by Vera Brittain, Juliette Towhidi, Sony Pictures Classics.



Vera Brittain in 1915. Her fiancé, brother and two best male friends died in WWI. Her memoirs became a best seller in both the U.S. and Britain.

NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

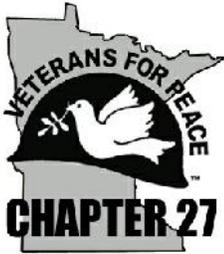
Please let us know if you want to receive our newsletter by email.
Contact: chantewolf7@gmail.com

EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

Second Sunday each month, 5:30--7:30 pm:
VFP Chapter 27 general meeting,
1806 Riverside Ave., #3A.
Executive meeting at 5 p.m.
FFI: Dave Logsdon at 612-203-9768.

4:30-5:30 pm Weds. Lake Street/Marshal Ave. Bridge vigil.



Veterans For Peace, Inc., Chapter 27
1806 Riverside Ave., #3A.
Minneapolis, MN 55454

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Winter 2015-16 Newsletter

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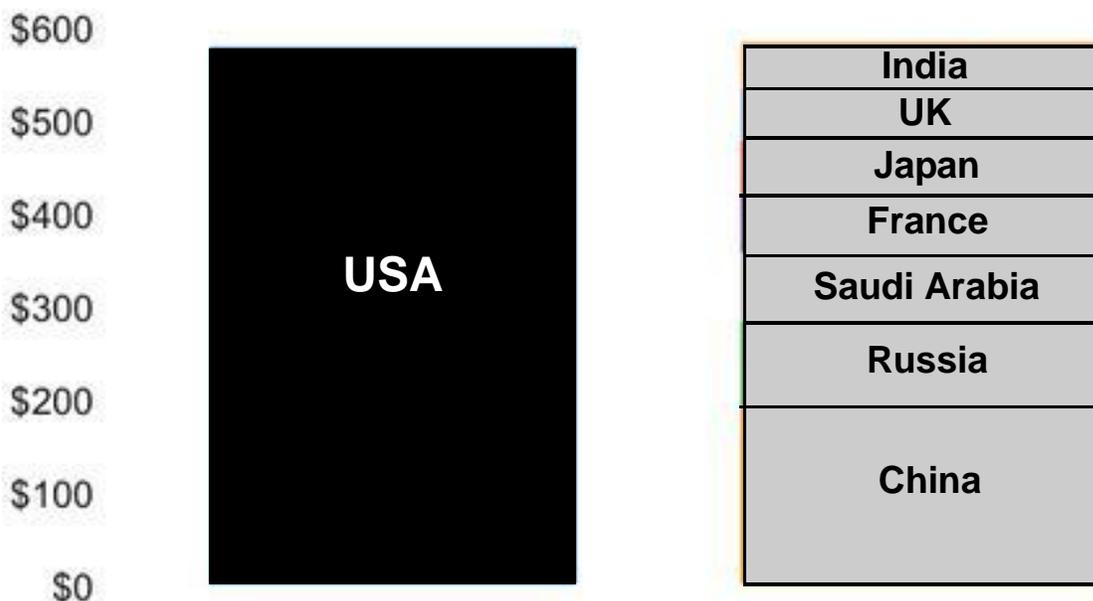
SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!

As of Dec. 6, 2015:

At least 6,867 dead in Iraq and Afghanistan;
over one million injured veterans (see below).

An estimated 22 veterans die from suicide each day,
amounting to over 24,090 over the past three years.

U.S. and World Military Spending, 2014 (in billions of constant 2011 dollars)



Source: SIPRI
National Priorities Project