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VETERANS FOR PEACE NEWS

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL VETERANS FOR PEACE, CHAPTER 27

Veterans For Peace News is published quarterly by Mpls./St. Paul Veterans For Peace, Chapter 27.

Veterans For Peace works to increase awareness of the costs of war, restrain our 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 non-violent 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)



Jan. 6 was the first time a Confederate flag flew in the nation's Capital building, a result of all the lies told by the former president and his followers. News organizations said he lied 20-30,000 times in four years, culminating in lies that he won the election and that it was stolen from him. So what can be done? The following lists some things President Biden has done in his first 60 days to make government function again.

Early report card for President Biden

by Barry Riesch

How's the administration doing? I committed to writing this article in February, focusing on the good things our new president has accomplished so far. Unfortunately things can change rapidly. As I write this, President Biden has just authorized the bombing of an Iranian "facility" in Syria. The attacks, which have led to multiple deaths, were aimed at Iranian-backed groups operating in Syria and Iraq, and of course will only exacerbate existing tensions in the region

I do, however, want to keep to my initial focus. Too often, we on the left focus so heavily on all the things which our "imperfect" leadership does or does not do and very little time on what they have done right. I know from my life experience so far that it is hard to convince people when you focus on negative things, rather than positives. I believe this

affects our relationship with our leaders and is a practice which could use some scrutiny.

In that spirit, here is a look at some of Biden's highlights.

Day One

On his first day, he issued a memorandum freezing the approval of rules passed in final days of Trump presidency. According to Biden's memorandum, all new and pending rules passed in the last days of Trump's tenure will be reviewed by department and agency heads.

Climate

President Biden has created a Special Presidential Envoy for the Climate, a position located within the National Security Council, and has chosen Sen. John Kerry to head this

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position. As I write, the VFP Climate Crisis Working Group has written a letter to Kerry in an effort to work with him, especially since the U.S. military is the largest institutional consumer of oil and emitter of CO2 in the world. The climate crisis cannot be solved without addressing U.S. militarism. We hope this will become a productive relationship.

The President has also directed his Administration to consider the climate crisis in U.S. Foreign Policy and National Security Considerations. Climate considerations are now an essential element of U.S. foreign policy and national security.

The order formally establishes the White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy, led by the first-ever National Climate Advisor and Deputy National Climate Advisor and calls for the establishment of a Civilian Climate Corps.

His order also formalizes his commitment to make environmental justice a part of the mission of every agency by directing federal agencies to develop programs, policies, and activities that address the disproportionate health, environmental, economic, and climate impacts on disadvantaged communities.

The President ended new fossil fuel leasing on public lands and waters, rejoined the Paris Agreement and called for an immediate review of harmful rollbacks of standards that protect our air, water, and communities.

The President cancelled the Keystone XL pipeline project, has forbidden new drilling for oil or gas on public lands, and announced a plan to convert the entire federal fleet of cars and trucks to electric vehicles.

The measure also restored several national monuments that Trump ended and paused oil and gas leasing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

He also established carbon friendly transit grants and released new rules for the social costs of carbon, methane and nitrous oxide.

Science

President Biden is planning to sign an Executive Order re-establishing the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. The memorandum charges the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) with the responsibility for ensuring scientific integrity across federal agencies.

Biden has done a good thing by nominating Deb Haaland, first Native American to serve as Secretary of the Interior (if confirmed) and by creating the most diverse cabinet in history.

In addition to agreeing to extend the New START treaty,

he has indicated a willingness to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal and has criticized Trump's nuclear buildup.

COVID

COVID is no longer a fake issue. When the country reached 500,000 American deaths from COVID, Biden led a memorial service for those who had died and created a national strategy for Covid-19 vaccinations.

This includes an Executive Order promoting Covid-19 safety in domestic and international travel and expanding access to Covid-19 treatments along with a data-driven response to the pandemic.

He rejoined the World Health Organization and created a Coronavirus Response Coordinator who will directly report to the President and be in charge of producing and distributing the Covid-19 vaccine.

He mandated mask-wearing on federal property and challenged all Americans to wear masks for 100 days with the "100 Day Mask Challenge." He is also requiring by executive order that physical distance be practiced and masks be worn in federal buildings and on federal lands.

The country is well on its way to meeting his promise of 150 million shots in his first 100 days.

Other Issues

What else has he done? He extended the Eviction Moratorium until at least March 31, paused student loans, stopped construction of the border wall, preserved DACA and rescinded the 1776 Commission.

He reversed the travel ban, prevented workplace discrimination against the LGBTQ community and ensured a lawful and accurate Census report. He is revising immigration policies and modernizing regulatory reviews.

Ethics and compassion are returning to the White House.

He signed an Executive order expanding food assistance programs and one assisting veterans with debt.

Unemployment insurance is available for workers who refuse work due to Covid-19.

He established "a network of benefit delivery teams" to coordinate with state and federal agencies to facilitate the distribution of federal aid amid the pandemic.

He is ending the government's reliance on private prisons and reaffirming commitment to tribal sovereignty.

He signed an Executive Order reinforcing Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act.

He revoked the "Mexico City policy," the global gag rule reinstated by Trump that blocks federal funding to foreign organizations that perform abortions or provide abortion

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The Prez says. . .

by Michael McDonald

The focus of our actions lately have been concentrating on nuclear and environmental issues.

We drove the Peace Bus to Palisade MN in January to support indigenous women in their effort to STOP LINE 3. After meeting Winona LaDuke, we went to a pipeline construction site to protest and managed to not get arrested. Our presence was important.

It's good to reconnect to the natural world, an action being led by indigenous women.

Also in January, Chapter 27 joined hundreds in a pipeline protest organized by 350.org at Kellogg Park in downtown St. Paul.

A group of our members also protested at Honeywell in January to bring attention to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. So far, 52 countries have signed on, but not the U.S.

To try and solve many of our problems the elephant (and donkey) in the room is military spending. According to the organization Win Without War, the U.S. has, since 2002, sold over \$600 billion worth of weapons to 167 different nations. We support Representatives Barbara Lee and Mark Pocan in their quest to cut military spending with help from the new Defense Spending Reduction Caucus. They both sit on the House Appropriations Committee and organized that group last summer. We will be pressuring our representatives to join this group.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama spoke these words recently:

"I believe that to meet the challenge of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. Each of us must learn to work not for



Our local chapter joined protests against Line 3 in both Palisades MN (upper picture) and downtown St. Paul (lower picture).

themselves, their family or nation, but for the benefit of all mankind. Universal responsibility is the real key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace, the equitable use of natural resources and through concern for future generations, the proper care of the environment."

All nations, especially ours, need to buy into this mindset.

If we can collaborate, maybe there's no revolution to televise

by Larry Johnson

Dance is always a collaboration – with another person, a group, the spirit? Some say there is no record of Emma Goldman saying, “If I can’t dance, I won’t join your revolution.” Others insist she lived before much speech was recorded, and certain factions wouldn’t want a woman credited with this great quote. She did write, “It requires less mental effort to condemn than to think,” and the church milieu I grew up in condemned dancing, saying it led to immorality. Long ago I left that rigid religion, and their immorality they couldn’t see. I learned to dance, but still found “fundamentalism” alive and not well. Tom Lehrer’s intro to his 1965 “National Brotherhood Week” was “I know some folks are not tolerant of others, and I can’t stand those people.” So, here are some random thoughts on the “C” in dance as collaboration, not condemnation, “singing out love between our brothers and our sisters, all over the world.”

CREATIVELY INCREASE PEACE PARTNERS

As VFP President in 2008, I suggested working with environmentalists and veteran care advocates, and some adamantly informed me “We have to focus on ending war.” I’m pleased to see that changing. Standing with Save Our VA (SOVA), or stopping pipelines and gun violence puts us together with caring people who may not share our total commitment to peace. The collaboration makes for common ground and interest in hearing our full story, if we hear theirs. A Capitol policeman after the January 6 horror said, “They tried to grab my gun to kill me with my own weapon. I thought about shooting, but realized I couldn’t stop them all, so I started saying I’ve got kids at home. There were people in that crowd who leaned in to protect me from the mob.” These were sincere people who believed the stolen vote story, but didn’t come with intention to harm anyone. No one would label them peace activists, but their spontaneous peacemaking says they could learn more “dance” steps.

CONNECT WITH VFP CODE OF CONDUCT

It’s under “Who We Are” on the national website, giving detailed guidelines for treating each other peacefully within the activist family. It alludes to the old proverb, “If there is peace in the heart, there will be peace in the family. If in the family, then in the community, then the country, and finally the world.”

CONSIDER STRATEGY OVER PURITY

My path to peace activism began in the milieu of “We are the only ones who follow the Bible correctly, and you must Kill Commies for Christ.” Learning the hidden truth that early Christians refused to kill in war started my change, but I still get judged in activist circles for saying, “I’d just like churches to get totally behind their 4th century Just War Theory.” When someone says sharply, “But you have to say END ALL WAR NOW,” my reply is, “If I say that, 99 percent of the people tune out. I prefer to softly explain what even most ministers don’t know, that the original doctrine says it’s a just war if no civilians are harmed, and 90 percent of modern war casualties are civilians.” That offers opportunity for discussion and complex support for more negotiation, thus less war. Again, in 2016 when Hillary Clinton wasn’t “pure” enough, I found myself name dropping peace icon Noam Chomsky. He said, “If you’re in a totally safe state, vote your conscience. If not, vote Hillary. She’ll preserve what progressive infrastructure we have, and we can keep building from there. The other guy will destroy it all.” I was told often, “Then Noam Chomsky is wrong.” The other guy got in.

CANCEL NAME CALLING

I’ve been judged for suggesting it is counterproductive to call Members of Congress “warmongers” for voting “wrong” on certain bills. Rather than saying, “You’re an evil idiot if your belief differs from mine,” I prefer, “I disagree, and this is the reason.” Screaming and name calling may be cathartic, but they keep us at war, in the neighborhood and the world. I prefer Thich Nhat Hanh’s collaborative advice: “In the peace movement we are good at angry protest letters. We need to write love letters that leaders might read and think over, not just toss.”

Many people, if not most, are actually at least amenable to peacemaking. For those so drenched in corruption they only hear the dance of talking money, I prefer calling out their names through a stronger legal system in the spirit of legendary Ben Ferencz. He prosecuted at Nurnberg, then just kept following Eisenhower’s call for an end to missiles that steal from the poor. Ferencz went after ALL leaders, not just dictators of small African nations. I want a world where people anywhere can dance, without fear the hall will be bombed to raise stock prices.

Deported veterans: a national disgrace

by Dave Logsdon

The Tijuana Chapter of Veterans For Peace is a beehive of activity. Formed by veterans who were deported by the U.S. government because they were arrested for various reasons, these folks are doing wonderful outreach and helping refugees denied entry into the U.S.. Yes, you say, they committed crimes, but we have a judicial system, and many have served their time for what they did. Deportation is cruel and unusual punishment. These folks can't access the VA or visit their families. These are veterans who, in good faith, served this country when the overwhelming majority of draft age men and women did not.

Veterans For Peace is the only national veterans organization leading the charge to bring these folks home. Some other veterans groups like to fly their POW/MIA flags, but in this important campaign, they are MIA. "Thank you for your service, now leave."

As a fundraising project that raises the awareness of the plight of these veterans, head muralist Javier Salazar Rojas and a group of artists have made a mural that has been transferred to vinyl banners, which they now want to send to sponsoring VFP chapters across the country. The name of the campaign is "Leave No One Behind Mural Project." It depicts the faces of a diverse group of veterans representing 11 countries.

Cesar Lopez, one of the founders of the project, asked Biden and Harris during last year's campaign if they would put the return of these vets to the U.S. in any immigration reform directives. At the time, Biden said that he would. But after his first presidential directives on immigration, the vets are still waiting.

We will be getting this mural here at our local chapter. Now we need to find a building or large wall to hang it on.



illustration by Eric Garcia

In the meantime, let's continue to call/email our representatives to end this disgraceful treatment of our veterans.

Not waiting for a moment's notice

by Steve McKeown

as translated:

On Sep. 26, 1983, five consecutive missile launches from the United States were detected by a Soviet Air Defense Center headed toward Soviet Russia with only minutes for a response. The military protocol called for the head officer to report the situation to their superiors (repeated computer searches found no system fault at the time), which most likely would have meant immediate retaliation. The head officer was Lt. Col. Stanislav Petrov, who made the decision at the very last moment to do nothing. Everyone in the Center waited for the incoming explosions that never came. It turned out to be a computer glitch, the cause of which to this day is unknown, just as it was unknown at the time that it was a glitch. Petrov was berated afterwards by his superiors for not correctly filling out a log.

For many years, Petrov would not talk to journalists, partially out of fear of reprisal, but he also became a recluse after his wife became ill with cancer and died. Years later he was persuaded to come to the UN to speak, and while here one of the things he wanted to do was meet the actor Kevin Costner, whom he admired. This was arranged, and is part of the documentary about Petrov called "The Man Who Saved the World," which can be viewed on YouTube. The last question Costner had for Petrov was: "How much damage would have been done had this not been stopped?" Petrov's response was riveting, and I use the words he said

"Our analysts say that after the first attack half of the US population will die. All systems of communications would be destroyed. The same thing would happen to the Soviet Union. There is a chance of a second strike occurring. The US would undoubtedly deliver a retaliatory nuclear strike. Thousands of missiles would be airborne. Then chaos would reign over our planet earth. This would lead to mass destruction. Sun rays wouldn't be able to reach the surface of the earth. At first a billion would die. Earth's population would simply, initially or a bit later, would simply vanish. And our planet would simply turn into a desert. Our planet would never be the same again. Never! Never!"

As our newsletter was being put together, I was on a Zoom Meeting organized by Nukewatch and other groups with 70 participants celebrating the Nuclear Ban Treaty, but also posing the question: "Where do we go from here?" Ideas were proposed, which will take another meeting before they can be fleshed out. But I believe two things are necessary. First, the nine nuclear nations have to come together to work this treaty out. And second, we may not be so fortunate to have someone like Stanislaw Petrov if the decision comes about again, and he thinks it will. So it is best to not wait until the bureaucratic angels decide it is safe to bring these nations together. The people must demand it.

Codepink Zoom with Representatives Lee and Pocan

by Paula Staff

A well-attended zoom meeting on a cold February evening was met with great enthusiasm and interest.

Rep. Barbara Lee (D, CA) was the sole vote against military intervention in Afghanistan in 2001. It has been named a legacy vote because of her courage and foresight.

Currently, she supports a 10 percent reduction in the military budget and an end to the "forever wars." Rep. Lee said that a way to bring other members "on board with the 10 percent reduction" would be "to educate them about the waste, fraud, and abuse of the defense department."

She noted that there was increased support "to repeal

the measures that support the forever wars." Rep. Lee added, "There is a lot of optimism. We have to hold the administration responsible. It is time for progressive policies that end forever wars and invest in our country."

Rep. Mark Pocan (D, WI) shared similar positions. He supports the 10 percent reduction in the military budget and is challenged by colleagues who counter with a matching 10 percent reduction in discretionary spending.

He emphasized that we are approaching the "season of appropriations," a time when it may be fortuitous "to get bills into congress." Like Rep. Lee, Rep. Pocan was optimistic. "It's a great way to work with others," he said, referring to the many ways to redirect large amounts of defense funding.

Anti-Nukes feeding our neighbors

by Joan Johnson

Kelly Lundeen describes a momentous world event — the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons being signed into law — which took place on Jan. 22nd (see her article on page 12 of this issue). In honor of this very important day, VFP members and supporters joined WAMM to run a food drive from Jan. 18 to 21. Orchestrated by Steve McKeown, folks dropped off non-perishable groceries at the VFP/WAMM office building.

Then on that bitterly cold Friday, Jan. 22nd, after attending the Honeywell action in Plymouth, (also described in Kelly's article), several participants caravanned to our headquarters. We organized, carried out and loaded up the VFP bus with 45 bags and five large boxes of groceries that had been collected all week long.

VFP's Treasurer Penny Gardner, inspired by her friend Sarah Olson's volunteer work there, had highly recommended Minnehaha Food Shelf (MFS) as our drop-off location. After veteran grocer and food shelf coordinator George Gallagher helped us carry in the bags and boxes, he gave us a tour of the facility. Housed at Minnehaha United Methodist Church building (3701 East 50th St.), this place is a well-organized and smoothly-run operation, the joint effort of volunteers from their own congregation and folks



Joan Johnson, Steve McKeown, Kristin Dooley and Craig Wood handing up boxes and bags of groceries to Dave Logsdon and Mike McDonald (in the bus)

from St. James Episcopal, Lake Nokomis Lutheran and the community-at-large.

George explained to us how hundreds of people from all different backgrounds and walks of life make regular use of their food shelf, and also their fourth-Saturday "MinneHarvest" trucker food distribution event. As of right now, 45 percent of food shelf recipients are children, he said, with many veterans who live in the VA housing nearby frequenting

their place. He explained ways that MFS is making food pick-ups easy and accessible while staying COVID-safe.

Thanks to all of you who so generously donated groceries and monetary donations. You definitely answered the call! And of course, thanks to everyone who helped collect and deliver the food. George let us know that the needs are ongoing. If you are interested in donating or helping out there, look them up on the web or call 612-721-6231. I was amazed to read about all of the many neighborhood outreach programs that operate out of that church!

Anti-nuke bumper stickers

We have 100 bumper stickers available that read NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE ILLEGAL. We will mail one free to anyone who wants to display it on a first come-first served basis.

Contact our office if you are interested at 612-821-9141 or vfpchapter27@gmail.com.

WORLD BEYOND WAR

VFP members Leah Bolger, Bruce Gagnon, and Paul Chappell are among the impressive International Speakers Bureau, headed up by David Swanson.

It is worth CHECKING out and

SUPPORTING this bureau.

www.worldbeyondwar.org/speakers/

The national perspective

by Dave Logsdon

"Service is the rent you pay for room on this earth."

Shirley Chisholm

Let me state the obvious: we are living in extraordinary times. This is certainly not the time for naval gazing and ruminating about our "first world problems." At Veterans For Peace we are in a unique position to create dynamic change and to leverage our small numbers to put some juice into these changes. Part of the challenge we face has to do with focusing our efforts when there are so many areas of concern. If you try to change the world in a day, you will burnout and end up on a couch eating Cheetos and watching Seinfeld reruns. The National VFP Board of Directors met in January to strategize around three goals which I will attempt to outline for you. Keep in mind that this does not preclude VFP from continuing to work in other areas; but these are our particular goals for this year.



World's largest peace pole, near the U of M campus in Minneapolis.

Nuclear Weapons are Illegal

"That's all folks!"

Looney Tunes

On January 22nd, the United Nations voted overwhelmingly to make nuclear weapons illegal. However "the big boys with their big toys" declined the invitation to sign on, soooooo, like so many UN initiatives like International Criminal Court, without the USA cooperation it lacks an enforceable apparatus.

What VFP is setting out to do this year is to have as many municipalities across this country pass resolutions to ask our government to endorse this UN treaty. Daunting, for

sure, but with imagination and action it can be done.

Two years ago, Steve McKeown told me about a vision he had to partner with Women Against Military Madness to get signatures to ban nuclear weapons from all 851 municipalities in the state of Minnesota! I thought at the time; "Good luck with that", but, as usual, my own lack of dreaming big was proven wrong! He and fellow "road warrior" Craig Wood, WAMM members, and a lot of the rest of us took to the highways and byways, bars, VFWs, garage sales across the state and made that dream a reality.

Dreaming Big; Peace Education

"I started out my campaign out of a Trader Joe's bag with a bunch of printed cards and an idea."

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Peace Poles, you've seen them. They are ubiquitous, churches, backyards, hell, there's a Peace Pole on the State Fair grounds! How about Peace Poles in schools along with an educational component around peace and justice? Retired Major Renee Marie has launched a campaign that will be part of National Veterans For Peace's strategies in 2021. Her vision is to have these peace poles all throughout

the LA school system. She is partnering with the local VFP chapter and the Rotary Club. This is a big dream, and in Minnesota we dream big!

The idea to get peace into the educational institutions with peace poles made me think of another VFP member named Paul Chappelle, retired West Point and Iraq War veteran who heads up The Peace Literacy Program. The merging of both these projects has stimulated my imagination as do 40 cups of coffee!

As co-founder of our local chapter, Steve McKeown has demonstrated often how one person can inspire and dream big, but that you have to roll up your sleeves and get out in the streets to make them happen. Steve does that, but he is not alone in planting the seeds, watering the sprouts, weed-

ing and harvesting (we usually have plenty of manure). Please email me (dlvfp27@gmail.com) with any suggestions or contacts you have with folks in our education system.

Reclaiming Armistice Day

"People don't want to experience change, they just want to wake up, and it's different!"
Chadwick Boseman

National VFP's third strategic project is reclaiming Armistice Day. Doing our bell ringing locally since the early 90s on Armistice Day, this campaign has its roots right here in Minnesota. On 11/11/11 we asked the city of Minneapolis to declare that day as Veterans/Armistice Day in Minneapolis and thanks to the good work of Councilperson Cam Gordon, Mayor Rybak came through for us.

In the past we've had as many as 100 local churches ring their bells at 11 a.m. on November 11th. That number has dwindled, but there is a campaign to contact churches and municipalities to recognize Armistice Day and ring those bells. Veterans Day has increasingly become an instrument to glorify war, as if remembering the high moral, physical, and monetary costs of war is some kind of left wing wackiness.

On Armistice Day, we honor the victims of our insatiable appetite for war by doubling down on our efforts to promote peace!

...and furthermore...

"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."
Leonard Cohen

In other news, my little "Instant Art Car" project is coming along nicely! There are instant VFP art cars now in Iowa City, Kansas City, Rochester (NY) and soon to be joined by Seattle, Mankato, and Red Wing. A kit consists of a big logo and designs and quotes and costs \$80 plus shipping and handling.

While promoting peace, we still will be raising our voices in solidarity with the oppressed from White Earth to Yemen, from Pakistan to Minneapolis. Join us in this struggle!



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301 Cedar Ave., West Bank
(downstairs under the bike shop)

Mayday Books has been a significant supporter of Chapter 27 for many years. The volunteer staff has provided help with mailings and has donated books for the use of our group. It's also a great place to drop in, have a cup of coffee and talk with whomever happens to be there. Find that book you have been looking for.

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

President Biden: “America is Back”

by Mike Madden

America Is Back has become a signature phrase for Joe Biden, the 46th president of the United States. It might even be called his mantra.

On November 24th, 2020, during the presidential transition, he used the phrase while announcing his picks for key cabinet positions. With his nominees on the stage behind him, he said that his national security and foreign policy team “reflects that America is back.”

On February 4th, 2021, in a domestic address introducing Antony Blinken as the newly confirmed Secretary of State, President Biden added emphasis to his catchphrase saying “America is back. America is back. Diplomacy is back at the center of our foreign policy.”

Two weeks later, on February 19th, Biden addressed western allies at the Munich Security Conference. Within the first minute of his speech, he twice declared to the international audience “America is back.”

Setting aside the questions of whether or not America ever ‘left’ and, if so, whether the world even wants America back, it’s important to understand what Biden means when he says “America is back.” Though he rarely mentions Donald Trump by name, the departure Biden refers to is clearly limited to the past four years of the Trump administration. When he argued “the muscle of democratic alliances [has] atrophied over the past few years of neglect and abuse,” he was no doubt referring to Trump’s repeated criticism of NATO. When Biden spoke of getting tough on President Putin for “Russia’s aggressive actions,” he was even more explicit saying he would do so “in a manner very different from my predecessor”.

It can be easily argued that NATO is indeed obsolete, and has been since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. But it is difficult to argue that Trump was soft on Russia when his administration leveled sanctions against Russia on six different occasions, expelled Russian diplomats, armed Ukraine, sold Patriot missiles to Poland, conducted war games in Estonia, bombed Russia’s ally Syria, occupied Syrian oil fields, and implemented a Nuclear Posture Review that more aggressively targeted Russia.

But the focus of this article is not the veracity of Biden’s accusations, nor the wisdom of his foreign policy. It is rather an examination of how frequently his emerging policies diverge from American orthodoxy, and are instead a continuation of those initiated by the man he called “the worst

president ever,” Donald Trump.

While president, Barack Obama decided not to prosecute WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange. To do so, he said, would present a “New York Times problem.” The Trump Justice Department reversed Obama’s decision in May 2019, bringing 18 criminal charges against Assange and seeking his extradition. On January 4th, 2021, a British judge ruled against Assange’s extradition. Rather than leave well enough alone, on February 12th the Biden Justice Department filed an appeal of the decision with the intent of bringing Assange to trial in the United States. While Biden is left to explain why he has taken up Trump’s mantle, Assange is facing 175 years in prison.

One might hope that the Trump-inspired assault on the U.S. Capitol would lead to sober reflection on how false allegations of election fraud can have disastrous consequences elsewhere in the world. Yet to this day, Biden has remained silent on false allegations of election fraud in the Bolivian election of 2019. These false allegations were a precursor to a coup that ousted the democratically elected Evo Morales. The military crackdown on demonstrations that followed the coup killed dozens of indigenous Bolivians.

The Biden administration definitely has not been silent on elections in Venezuela. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke plainly at his confirmation hearing. He labeled democratically elected President Nicolas Maduro a “brutal dictator” and said the Biden administration would continue the Trump-era recognition of Juan Guaido as president, a man who has never stood for election to the office and has twice instigated failed coups against the legitimate, internationally recognized government. He also agreed with Senator Marco Rubio that the United States should not negotiate with the Maduro government, a curious statement coming from the man designated to be America’s top diplomat.

Regarding Israel, the Trump administration transgressed several longstanding U.S. positions as well as international law. United Nations Resolution 748 affirmed Jerusalem as an internationally administered city whose final status is to be determined by negotiated agreement. It also called upon all nations to withdraw their diplomatic missions from the city. All nations were in compliance until May 2018, when the Trump administration recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and moved the American

America is Back, Continued on page 15

Post-election demonstration charges against 646 protesters need to be dropped

by Sue Ann Martinson

On November 4, 2020, following the presidential election, demonstrators in Minneapolis marched to and blocked traffic on I-94 in an All Power to the People demonstration, demanding policy and cultural changes such as an end to oppression of people of color and climate justice. The demonstrators were kettled by law enforcement, which means they were encircled, trapped and not allowed to leave the highway. Then they were ticketed.

Daniel Berrigan said, "Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, for the burning of paper instead of children" in Vietnam after the Catonsville Nine protest. He went on to ask, "How many must die before our voices are heard, how many must be tortured, dislocated, starved, maddened? When, at what point, will you say no to war?" Whether in war abroad or war at home, human rights in this day and age so often do not apply, especially for people of color.

So, apologies, good friends, for the "fracture of good order" on I-94. Stop. Look. Listen. Something here needs your attention. Something here needs to be changed. Practicing nonviolent protest in the exercise of freedom of speech is in direct contrast to the belief that military might, whether it be the police and law enforcement or the bombs raining in Yemen, is the way to solve anything. Violence begets violence.

On January 6, 2021, violent and armed protesters who stormed the Capitol in Washington D.C. were egged on by an angry President, who equated strength with military might and violence while trying to convince his followers that the presidency was stolen from him by fraud. The war abroad, the war at home, neither will be solved with military might.

Roland Bleiker talked about the need for order in society but also about how law and order can be unjust. And that at times dissent in the form of disruption of order is necessary for a democracy to flourish.

He recognized the need for order in all societies, noting that: "Order is a necessary pre-condition for democracy, the rule of law, the provision of human rights, and human civilization itself."

Having said that, he also recognizes that "...the politics of order and the politics of disturbance are more intricate than they might seem. Many injustices, from domestic abuse to torture and genocide, occur not from lack of order

but under an unjust order."

Bleiker used Nazi Germany as an example, a regime that had a "meticulous infatuation with order," yet called for and acted upon promoting the genocide of whole groups of people who did not meet their idea of racial purity. How far away are we from that same idea?

Dissent is an essential component of democracy. Bleiker wrote:

"A functioning democratic system, one that listens to and debates grievances and heeds dissident voices, is far more likely to generate political outcomes capable of avoiding such disruptive and often violent scenarios."

Drop the charges. Instead listen to the dissident voices, the grievances and the pain, and change what causes them. I'd rather see dancing in the streets.

Two Different Signs

by Steve McKeown

On Jan 1, 2015, I started walking while carrying a sign I had picked up from the Lake Street Bridge Vigil that read, "Stop These Endless Wars" down every street in Richfield where I live. I walked down both sides of the main streets with much backtracking, for a total of 218 miles.

My doctor wanted me to walk more to increase my aerobic activity because I had my sternum cut apart at the VA during open heart surgery to replace an aortic valve. The walking was very icy and often cold, but it was heartwarming when people sometimes came out of their houses to wave. Near a large elementary school hundreds of kids were out playing in the snow. Some of them came up and wanted to know what I was doing, so I told them. As I walked away, one of them said, "I love Veterans For Peace."

This past week, our chapter VFP Executive Committee passed a resolution to support a letter to President Biden, most of which contained what my sign

Signs, Continued on page 13

You've Been Notified, Honeywell

by Kelly Lundeen

Before the 50th nation's ratification was submitted, Nukewatch had begun coordinating nationally to prepare for the historic moment that the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons would enter into force. So on January 22, 2021 there were over 100 actions in the U.S. and 200 around the world, a great show of strength in our grassroots activism for nuclear abolition to celebrate a new dawn for humanity.

One such action was the delivery of a copy of the new nuclear ban treaty to Honeywell Aerospace in Plymouth by the End War Committee (comprised of Vets for Peace, Chapter 27, and Women Against Military Madness) and Nukewatch of Wisconsin. Debate over whether or not to notify Honeywell of the action led to a call to the plant with a request for a meeting with the plant manager. On any regular work day, traffic comes and goes freely into the parking lot and building.

But on January 22, Honeywell representatives and security were waiting for us with two white vans, orange cones, and a "greeter," but no plans for a meeting with the manager.

When we attempted to enter the parking lot, the "greeter" asked for a badge from anyone entering Honeywell property. An indigenous member of our group reminded the Honeywell rep that it was not Honeywell property, but rather Treaty (indigenous) property.

A statement was read to the Honeywell rep. "What Honeywell does through its involvement in the production of the Trident II nuclear missiles, the replacement for the land-based nuclear missiles and its work at national nuclear labs and plants is now illegal under international law. We requested that all of Honeywell to follow the lead of thr

local Honeywell (in Plymouth) and get out of the nuclear weapons industry. The victims of nuclear war, testing and production need to be respected and compensated, and their communities must be protected. We need to end this welfare for the nuclear industry and start funding real human needs.

Nuclear weapons were always immoral. Now they are also illegal.

The vast majority of people support their abolition. Polls have shown that people in the countries with nuclear weapons, including 65 percent of Americans, want their government to change course.

Even states that have refused to join the Treaty are affected by it entering into force. Previous disarmament Treaties had major impacts even on countries that refused to sign. If you look at the cluster munitions treaty, the U.S. has never signed it. However, U.S. companies producing cluster munitions ended production after it entered into force, despite the U.S. not being a party.

Now Honeywell has to decide which side of history it will be on regarding nuclear weapons.

Today, civil society the world over has triumphed. Decades of activism has achieved what many said was impossible: nuclear weapons are banned.

This is beginning of the end of nuclear weapons. There is a new reality in international disarmament, and that is a world without nuclear weapons. That is the world we want our children to inherit."

After the Vets for Peace rang bells to commemorate the end of the war to end all wars, five-year-old and seven-year-old members of Nukewatch presented copies of the Treaty to the Honeywell rep.

Honeywell has been forced to comply with internation-



Protesters at Honeywell demanding nuclear weapons be banned. Photo by Steve Clemens

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Follow the Bouncing Ball

by Ron Staff

Follow the Bouncing Ball.

Veterans and citizens of our country of a certain age “get” the title. In the four years of slap-dash “politics” we’ve all just come through figuring out what ball is to be watched has been full time work.

At a movie theater, words would be projected on the big screen while music played and the audience was instructed to sing the word the ball was hovering over. In time with the music the ball was shown to bounce from the word you were singing to the next one to be sung in time with the music. A community choir came out of the other ticket holders and one’s self.

Following the community conversation on issues of governing ourselves, has been dislocated significantly. The tune-up is under way and catching the new notes may be a daily challenge until there are useful terms that become commonly agreed upon.

Racism will not be fixed by the people who have been targeted in the past. The question for a mixed, diverse citizenry is whether mutual engagement can actually happen without talking to one another.

Everyone on military duty is defending the governing system in which we live. Following orders is fundamental. But being that system is different in that after being responsive we now become responsible. The bouncing ball has moved our following orders to helping make the governing system worth being defended.

The ball is in a new court. The private citizen is the source of power; not the officials duly bound to lead in some kind of reasonable manner. If they can’t name what needs doing, don’t empower them.

What will they do to make every citizen feel safe? If people don’t call the police because they don’t feel safe around police, it’s the police and politician’s fault.

As a white veteran I have not been able to figure out how to be an ally to all my veteran and civilian friends and acquaintances who are not white.

And I feel terrible. When a kitchen work buddy was killed at Attica because the white governor would not go meet with black inmates for whatever reason but instead sent in armed white men, I was silent and abhorred. Could a non-violent way have been successful?

When I noticed that the thickness of walls in “the projects” in a big city were about half that in our wooden second floor duplex walls, what could I do? I was not

impressed by my “betters” who governed that area. They didn’t show me much.

I sometimes wonder how my iron-prospecting progenitors viewed the actions of the “moneyed” men who were called in to create the mine that at first created great schools for the children of the miners and then fought unions seeking better wages. How did that switch come about?

I do recall a Catholic friend’s father pointing out two long trenches cut in an escarpment hill visible from Bismarck that crossed. He reported that when he was a boy in town the Ku Klux Klan would fill them with dried tumble weed, soak them with kerosene and light the whole thing on fire to announce their anti-Catholic gathering. That hill later carried St. Mary’s University. Good for them.

Yet, I am not Catholic. Good speed to them. I hope they will find their way.

I cannot think of a thing I have done in payment for the many gifts I have gotten from members of the Native American community in North Dakota. While I’ve watched the white, well-to-do move the oil pipe line down stream from the Bismarck city water intake. There it happens to be up stream from the Fort Yates water intake. But I am not living there so I can only be embarrassed once again by my white, male brethren’s bad behavior.

The modeling is not particularly impressive. They won’t be a tough act to follow.

Neither will 45 be as far as confronting real issues of governing and mediating conflicts, which is the heart of self governance.

Signs, from page 11

embodied. The part of the letter that I objected to and wanted removed was the claim that it was lawful for an armed attack against an occupying force. Imagine if I carried a sign that said it is lawful for an armed attack against our soldiers.

The executive committee then sent it in the name of our chapter instead of from the committee. Perhaps you, the readers of this newsletter may want to weigh in on this. And for those paid-up members and associates who ask to be put on the VFP e-mail list, you too can be on Zoom notifications and vote in chapter meetings if you want, and perhaps help rein in the emerging centralized power of the Executive Committee on matters of policy. We welcome new participants.

What would 10 percent of Pentagon budget buy?

compiled by Frank Fuller

Last summer, 93 members of the House and 23 Senators voted to cut the Pentagon budget by 10 percent. Last summer also saw the formation of the Defense Spending Reduction Caucus, which is dedicated to cutting that budget by 10 percent.

The Pentagon budget is now over \$700 billion a year, and President Biden said during the campaign last year that he supported increases in parts of the budget. Whether that will lead to an actual increase in the budget is unknown.

But what is known is that the Pentagon budget crowds out spending on items that could improve lives of millions of Americans. So if the Pentagon lost 10 percent of its funding, how could over \$70 billion improve our lives?

It would fund monthly **relief payments of \$1200**. Or it would pay for **270,000 COVID hospital stays**.

It could fund **145,000 infrastructure construction jobs**.

It could provide **birth control and pelvic exams** for women through Planned Parenthood for the next 130 years. Conservatives and their insurrectionist allies have been trying for years to defund Planned Parenthood, which is a direct attack on women's health. This money

would help end that.

Pay **tuition at public universities** for about two million students for a year.

It could provide **pre-kindergarten for all American children** for the year.

Expand the child tax credit. It would fall a little short, but \$100 billion would fund a tax credit of \$300 a month for children under six and \$250 a month for children from six to 18. It would also be available to all children. Currently, this tax credit only phases in when parents earn \$2500.

We could have **child care for all Americans**.

It would pay for **solar power** for one year for nearly 40 million households.

It could also create **one million clean energy jobs** for one year.

About **25 million children** could receive **health insurance**.

It would pay for **Medicare for all** for about **20 million adults and children** for a year.

Report card, from page 2

tion counseling or referrals.

Additionally, Biden directed the Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate whether to rescind Trump regulations under the Title X family planning program, which pulled funding from hundreds of women's health clinics across the country in 2019.

This is a partial list of Biden's accomplishments. It shows that a President does have the power to make good things happen. Let's hope he keeps it going throughout his term.

FYI If you would be interested in joining Veterans For Peace Climate Crisis and Militarism Working Group (CCMWG) please contact me. Barry Riesch at bwrvp27@gmail.com

EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

4-5 pm Weds. Lake Street/Marshall Ave. Peace Bridge vigil. (After April 1, 5-6 pm.)

Monthly VFP chapter meeting, 2nd Sun., 6 pm. They are now virtual meetings. Contact VFP at 612-821-9141 for information on how to connect.

4:45 pm Weds., 50th and Halifax, Mpls. Grandmothers for Peace Vigil. (FFI call 612-927-7607)

3-4 pm Mondays. White Bear Lake peace vigil. Corner of 4th Street and Hwy 61.

America is back, from page 10

embassy there from Tel Aviv.

Secretary of State Blinken put the Biden administration stamp of approval on Trump's rogue action at his confirmation hearing. When Senator Ted Cruz asked "Do you agree that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, and do you commit that the United States will keep our embassy in Jerusalem?" Blinken responded, "Yes and yes."

Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights was yet another transgression of international law, violating both the UN Charter and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Its occupied status was recognized by virtually the entire world, including the United States, until Trump issued a proclamation on March 25th, 2019, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan. Asked about the Trump administration moves, Blinken chose to dodge the legal question, but voiced no objection to Trump's proclamation, adding approvingly "as a practical matter, the Golan is very important to Israel's security."

Relations with Iran had improved markedly under President Obama. The JCPOA was a significant diplomatic achievement that brought sanctions relief to Iran, and confidence to the world that Iran's civilian nuclear program could not produce a bomb. President Trump unilaterally withdrew in 2018 and reimposed sanctions. Iran then incrementally moved away from its obligations but, seeking rapprochement, informed the incoming Biden administration that it would return to compliance if the Trump sanctions were lifted.

Rather than accept Iran's entirely reasonable proposal,

the Biden administration has signaled it prefers the Trump approach by countering with preconditions and poison pills. Mr. Blinken is demanding that Iran come back to compliance before sanctions are lifted, and has said that he would use renewed negotiations as a platform to capture other issues such as Iran's missile program and what he termed "Iran's destabilizing behavior." One wonders if Blinken could point to any Iranian action that has been more destabilizing to the region than the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which he and Biden both supported.

Blinken further aligned himself with the violent and lawless foreign policy of Trump in an exchange with Senator Ron Johnson. Asked about the assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, Blinken dismissed the question of whether or not "taking him out was the right thing to do." Instead, he explained how the assassination hindered America's ability to operate in the region. This seems to indicate that the ban on political assassination will not be an obstacle for the Biden administration if the killing of a foreign leader is perceived to advance American interests.

During their penultimate debate, Trump asked Biden if he was for "law and order." Biden responded, "I'm for the law and you following it." On matters of foreign policy, it is now clear that a more truthful answer would have been, "I'm for you breaking it and me surfing your wake."

Honeywell, from page 12

al law in the past.

Those involved in the Honeywell Project opposing Honeywell's role in the production of cluster munitions may have never believed that the US would sign onto a treaty banning cluster munitions. They may have believed that Honeywell would never stop producing them and that their actions were futile.

Would they have guessed that Honeywell would stop producing cluster bombs as they were demanding, despite the U.S. never signing onto the treaty banning them? That is what happened.

Some say that we shouldn't bother trying to ban nuclear weapons in the U.S. I say we can't afford not to. And history has shown us that the unimaginable can happen.

About the January 22 actions, Ralph Hutchison of Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance said, "It was a

moment, and now it is our job to make it a movement." Undoubtedly, Vets for Peace and WAMM are already doing that.

See a video of the action at youtu.be/dtWkEF63jCo.

Memorial Day Service

We will be conducting our yearly Memorial Day Service at 9:30 am on Memorial Day, Monday, May 31.

FFI contact Barry Riesch at bwrvp27@gmail.com.



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Spring 2021 Newsletter

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SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!

As of Mar. 4, 2021:

At least 7,038 dead in Iraq and Afghanistan;
over one million injured veterans.

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



Photo at left: The Minnesota Peace Action Coalition sponsored an anti-war rally in Minneapolis on February 27. About 60 demonstrators showed up to protest President Biden's decision to bomb Syria and speak out against other American military involvements in the Middle East. Photo at right: VFP and WAMM member Penelope Gardener is back on the job after a recent stroke and seen bumping elbows with Mike Madden.