



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

Here is an ABC News story showing that military drones that are killing innocent civilians in Afghanistan are being controlled at March Air Force Base. Should we contact Cindy Sheehan, Ann Wright and others to hold a protest?

Inside the Drone War: On the Ground and in the Virtual Cockpit With America's New Lethal Spy ABC News Granted Exclusive Access to Drone Pilots at California Air Force Base

By DAVID MUIR
Jan. 12, 2010

Far from the mountains of Afghanistan, an American Air Force base sits in California. It is here where unmanned Predator drones are flown by remote control. They're America's newest lethal spy, hovering 3 miles above the ground in the skies over Afghanistan and Iraq. Forty are in the air at any single moment, thousands of miles away from their desk-bound pilots. ABC News was given exclusive access to the ground control station at the California base, one of six bases in the country where the planes are flown.

Each drone is controlled by a two-man team, seated in front of a video screen clutching a joystick. On the screens, the men see live video from the drones in Afghanistan, picking out armed enemies on the ground who have no idea they're being watched. The pilot can launch a missile simply by pulling a trigger.

The drones send back images in the blink of an eye -- it takes just 1.7 seconds for the imagery to travel through 12 time zones. The video travels from the drone to a satellite and then down to a classified location in Europe. From there, it flows through a fiber optic nerve across the Atlantic Ocean to reach the California base. But it's not finished -- the signal then branches out to other bases, the Pentagon, and right back to the ground commander in Afghanistan.

The drones are armed with a 500-pound bomb that destroys with percussive force or an equally powerful Hellfire missile that leaves a crater 15 feet wide and two feet deep. We watched as a pilot monitored insurgents planting an IED in northern Afghanistan. It made a good target, and with the punch of a button, a Hellfire missile launched, taking the insurgents out.

The missiles are fired only 15 percent of the time a potential target is identified, and only if a ground team can make a positive identification of the target.

According to Col. Randall Ball of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing, the decision to fire a weapon "is no different from an F-15 pilot -- he has the same adrenaline rush and goes through those procedures and does things as he's trained."

Some might wonder if there's a fear of making mistakes when you're so far removed from the battlefield, but to that, Ball says, "Is there a possibility that something could go wrong? Always. But that's not our mindset. I don't think the way we are prosecuting the war could be done without the drones."

The Obama administration has approved skyrocketing usage of drones -- 400 hours a day, a 300 percent increase. On this one California base alone, over the last six months, not one hour has gone by when Air Force pilots haven't been watching over Afghanistan through the years of at least one Predator drone. The technology has been such a game-changer that over the next year, the Air Force will now train more drone pilots than fighter and bomber pilots combined.

It can be a strange experience for the pilots. Lt. Col. Dana Hessheimer says, "You're in a fight 7,500 miles away and then you go to your

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kid's soccer game.”

It's a stark contrast to all the soldiers who don't make it back to their children, but the drone pilots know their work is important. Every minute in the cockpit helps defend their military colleagues on the battlefield and improve their chances of getting home alive.

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HOWARD ZINN: PRESENTE

“If those in charge of our society – politicians, corporate executives, and owners of press and television – can dominate our ideas, they will be secure in their power. They will not need soldiers patrolling the streets. We will control ourselves.”

— Howard Zinn, Ph.D., (1922-2010)

FUNDS FOR HAITIAN RELIEF

By Jim Sorter

Over the weekend of January 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th, members of Humboldt Bay Chapter VFP56 were involved in a fund-raiser to solicit contributions to send to Haiti for the massive relief efforts they so desperately need for their citizens after a 7.2 earthquake devastated their lives and their homeland.

Members of VFP Humboldt Bay Chapter 56 collected funds to be channeled through DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS, a proven organization on the ground in Haiti which will make sure 100% of the funds donated marked for Haiti will provide vital medical care that the Haitians need.

Saturday 17th members tabled in front of COOP in Arcata for 7 hours. At the end of the day the customers of COOP had donated \$564.00. The original goal was \$500.00. After they saw they were over the goal, it was decided to try to stretch efforts to see if \$1000.00 could be collected.

The next day, Sunday, the members approached Wildberries in Arcata to see if they could table inside their establishment as the

weather was very inclement. Phil Ricord opened up his store and allowed them in out of the rain. While tabling in Wildberries 7 hours the customers, including a 10 year old boy donating his weekly allowance, gave an additional \$660.00.

The following day on Monday after asking Carlos Avalar if VFP members could table inside Murphy's in Sunnybrae for the same cause, he gave a resounding, “YES!” The customers in Murphy's Sunnybrae store gave \$412.00

Tuesday's collection was done outside of Safeway and again to COOP to try to exceed the \$1700.00 mark, but by that time most customers who were going to contribute already had done so. Only \$74.00 was raised that day.

The story does not end there! After announcing the total to our membership, generous checks for \$500.00 and \$150.00 were given by members, bringing the total collected to \$2360.00

Many thanks to the generous members who gave encouragement and support. We are blessed in our VFP56 Chapter by the many caring members who gave to Doctors Without Borders. The people of our area were generous and caring.

Special thanks go to the COOP Manager, Wildberries Market owner Phil Ricord, Sunnybrae Murphy's Market Manager Carlos Avalar and to Safeway's manager for going above the call of duty to show their compassion for the Haitians who will receive the benefits of their support.

Next VFP56 meeting will be held on Thursday, February 4th at 7:00 PM. Meeting will be held in the Commons Room at 550 Union Street in Arcata.

Protest Song Lands Battle Weary Veteran in Jail Without Bail

By Mashaw McGuinnis

Sing a song, go to jail. Is that the message our country is sending to those serving in the military? Freedom of speech is supposed to apply to all Americans, but apparently not to enlisted members. Army Specialist and Iraq War veteran Marc Hall who is also a hip-hop musician wrote a song about stop-loss and now he's serving time for it.

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Single Mother Charged for Refusing Army De- ployment to Take Care of Her Infant Son

By *RUSS BYNUM AP News*
Jan 13, 2010 11:47 EST

The Army said Wednesday it has filed criminal charges against a single-mom soldier who refused to deploy to Afghanistan last year, arguing she had no family able to care for her infant son.

Spc. Alexis Hutchinson, a 21-year-old Army cook, could face a prison sentence and a dishonorable discharge if she is convicted by a court-martial. But first, an officer will be appointed to decide if there's enough evidence to try a case against her.

Hutchinson's attorney, Rai Sue Sussman, said she still hopes the case can be settled without a military trial. She said the Army should consider Hutchinson's reason for not deploying overseas — that she was afraid of what would happen to her baby.

"There are other routes if they really want to punish her," Hutchinson's attorney, Rai Sue Sussman, said Wednesday. "I don't think the situation was serious enough to warrant a criminal matter."

Hutchinson of Oakland, Calif., was scheduled to deploy from Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah on Nov. 5. She skipped her unit's flight, saying the only relative she had to take care of her 10-month-old son — her mother — was overwhelmed by the task and backed out a few days before Hutchinson's departure date.

Kevin Larson, a spokesman for Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, said that Hutchinson was charged Tuesday with missing movement — for missing her overseas flight — being absent without leave, dereliction of duty and insubordinate conduct.

The stiffest charge, missing movement, carries a maximum penalty of two years in prison and a dishonorable discharge.

"The charges against Spc. Hutchinson stem from the fact she didn't do her duty," Larson said. "They know their deployment dates. They have to show up. Otherwise, they have to face the consequences."

Sussman said Hutchinson was at her apartment outside the Army post when her unit deployed, but was in touch with her commanders by phone. The soldier returned to the post about a day later, she said, and was arrested.

Sussman said the soldier was afraid to show up for her overseas

flight because one of her superiors had told her she would have to deploy and turn her child over to the state foster care system.

Larson said the Army would not deploy a single parent with no one to care for her child.

The decision to charge Hutchinson was far different than the Army's handling of another recent case involving a military mom.

Lisa Pagan of Davidson, N.C., was granted a discharge after she fought being recalled to the Army, under the military's "individual ready reserve" program, four years after she left active duty.

Pagan reported for duty at Fort Benning in west Georgia last February with her two young children in tow. She argued that her husband traveled for business too often to care for their children alone. While Pagan and her attorney battled the Army through appeals, she was never accused of refusing orders.

The Army requires all single-parent soldiers to submit a care plan for dependent children before they can deploy to a combat zone.

Hutchinson had such a plan — her mother, Angelique Hughes, had agreed to care for the boy. Hughes said she kept the boy for about two weeks in October before deciding she couldn't keep him for a full year.

According to the Defense Department's latest demographic report, there are more than 70,500 single parents on active duty in the U.S. military — about 5 percent of all service members. Nearly half of military single parents are in the Army.

Cases like Hutchinson's, where a conflict between deployment orders and parental duties lead to a prosecution, appear to be rare, said Lory Manning, a retired Navy captain who studies how military policies affect women for the nonprofit Women's Research and Education Institute.

"There are thousands upon thousands of single parents that have deployed since the war in Afghanistan started," Manning said. "Things don't fall apart that often. Sometimes the family care plan doesn't work for whatever reason, but overall it works well."

Hutchinson's commanders granted her a leave last month so she could spend the holidays at her mother's home in California. Before that, she had been prohibited from leaving the Army post.

Hutchinson, who is assigned to the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, joined the Army in 2007 and had no previous deployments. Sussman said Hutchinson is no longer in a relationship with her son's father.

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Hughes said she's already taking care of her ailing mother and sister, as well as a daughter with special needs. She also runs a day-care center at her home, keeping about 14 children during the day.

Hughes said she returned Kamani to his mother in Georgia a few days before her November deployment.

She said they told her daughter's commanders they needed more time to find another family member or close friend to help Hughes care for the boy, but Hutchinson was ordered to deploy on schedule.

Hutchinson's son, Kamani, was placed into custody overnight with a day-care provider on the Army post after she was arrested and jailed briefly in November for skipping her flight. Hutchinson's mother picked up the child a few days later and took him back to her home in California.

Hutchinson is not in custody. Sussman said Wednesday that Hutchinson's son, who had his first birthday this month, returned home with his mother to Georgia after the holidays.

Russ Bynum has covered the military based in Georgia since 2001.

Army charges single mom who refused deployment

Single mother charged for refusing Army deployment to take care of her infant son

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At the January 2010 Chapter meeting our “Artist In Residence,” Carol Pridgen, presented her graphite portrait of Bill and June Thompson in honor of their work on behalf of Veteran For Peace, Nuclear Disarmament, the founding of Chapter 56, and many other actions toward the abolition of war and making a better world for all.

Photos courtesy of Nate Lomba

“Avatar”: Timely Political Messages in a Colorful Package

By Mashaw McGunnis

We are used to loud, colorful public controversy surrounding Michael Moore’s films full of strong social/political messages. The controversy generated by “Sicko” and “Capitalism: A Love Story” had many audience members paying to see it a second and third time, taking their friends and family members to see it. This phenomenon is happening again, only this time it’s not a documentary but a big-budget, high-tech Hollywood feature: “Avatar”. Written and directed by one of Hollywood’s mainstream heavies James Cameron, the filmmaker who brought us “The Titanic”, “The Terminator” and “Aliens”. Cameron is highly regarded by movie industry professionals and the general public and does not churn out anything low budget. But this time Cameron has outdone himself because “Avatar” shines a spotlight on America’s war-supported consumptionism. Roger Ebert, considered by many to be a film guide guru declared “it has a flat-out Green and anti-war message”. The timeliness of this flick is just too close to home for some, but for many it is a long-overdue airing of America’s dirtiest laundry.

The story takes place about 150 years in the future where a pri-

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vately owned military from earth invades a new world “Pandora”. Scientists have discovered an extremely valuable mineral called “unobtainium” on the planet and faster than you can say “Halliburton” dollar signs appear before the eyes of the earth’s corporate CEOs. Thus begins their military-led “negotiations” for the mining rights. Pandora is inhabited by a peaceful race of beings who pose no threat to humans, they simply want to be left alone. When the story’s hero, a paraplegic American marine, finds himself immersed in the culture of the Na’vi, he “goes native”. He feels driven to defend their unspoiled planet from the corporate-owned military which not only sent him there to spy, but promised him “a new pair of legs” when he succeeds. The ethical quandary our hero finds himself in is reminiscent of many present day conscientious objectors.

The obvious parallels between “Avatar” story line and U.S. foreign policy is drawing a lot of angry responses from the right. Lines from the script were lifted right out of W’s speeches and make it impossible to see it as totally fiction. Lines like “pre-emptive war” and “shock and awe” have ruffled more than a few pro-military feathers. A quick Google of “James Cameron” or the movie’s title will show numerous websites and blogs spouting arguments going on between the political left and right. Some angry veterans are going so far as to call for a total boycott of the film by military members, calling it un-American and insulting.

Hoping to explain why this movie is so important right now, Cameron participated in a Q and A recently after a screening in a Hollywood theater. There he explained his motives about making such a controversial film: “I’ve heard people say this film is un-American, while part of being an American is having the freedom to have dissenting ideas,” he insisted. “This movie reflects that we are living through war,” Cameron explained, “There are boots on the ground, troops who I personally believe were sent there under false pretenses, so I hope this will be part of opening our eyes”.

Cameron’s message has helped to open the eyes of children and grandchildren of veterans, who haven’t been able to grasp the experience of war any other way. Many combat vets find the film to be a profoundly positive experience. Mike Hastie, a Viet Nam veteran living in Portland said that after years of trying to explain his wartime experience to his grandchildren, sharing the movie with them finally brought some clarity. “About half hour into the movie” Hastie said “I turned to them and said ‘This movie is about Viet Nam’! And instantly I could see the light bulbs flash in their minds, they finally got it”. Mike felt so moved by the movie and its clear message, that he believes it could even be a powerful tool in the high schools to bridge the gap of understanding between veterans and high school students. “I could actually feel validation while I was watching it” he said candidly, “that story was about me”.

But even civilians lacking wartime experience are equally moved by the story. VFP member Mark Dubrow liked the film and thought it demonstrated how one person can make a huge difference, even the difference between life and death of an entire civilization. The use of a severely incapacitated soldier as a hero was effective he thought, while at the same time providing a sense of hope to disabled people. Illustrating the paradox of the two cultures Mark mentioned “the invaders perceive locals as backward, but they (locals) have sophisticated society based on respect for nature and understanding of fundamental interconnectedness of everything”. Mark also pointed out the similarities between the film’s Na’vi people and Native Americans. One example he gave was their practice of personally thanking the animals when they find it necessary to take their lives, reinforcing the value of interconnectedness with nature.

Those not-so-subtle touches on Native American culture vs. the military complex made the film going experience uncomfortable for other members. Jim Sorter found it disturbing in that “it was so historically reminiscent of what happened to the Native American population in the United States, conquered by a much more technological foe”. Equally bothered by the story’s obvious environmental implications, Jim summarized it this way: “the wanton destruction of our ecology by the elitist money grubbers of the world! It is sad that history has shown most of the time one successful defeat in battle does not win a war. History has shown the bullies will be back with bigger and better weapons”.

Still for other members, “Avatar” was simply a well-made movie that was worth seeing. Steve Sottong saw the highly anticipated 3D version and liked it. He seemed to appreciate its technical aspects and said the state-of-the-art 3D version didn’t take away from the main story line. His observation was that it was “not quite as ‘airy fairy’ as some in this genre -- less metaphysical and more physical”. Interpreting it as deeper than just action and adventure Steve summed it up as “a man learning to love the life around him and be open to the wonder of the world around him”.

“Opening up to the wonder of the world” is not exactly a traditional American theme, it is more akin to stories about indigenous people. But the story told through profit-hungry corporations waging war seems an effectively way to reach U.S. audiences exactly the way Cameron had hoped. As of this writing, the film’s box office revenues had surpassed 500 million dollars. Now that’s a lot of unobtainium.

Possible Change in the Preamble to the US Constitution

By Richard Gilchrist

The recent Supreme Court action giving corporations personhood prompted me to once again review the US Constitution. Over the



years I've read the Constitution many times. I've always found it interesting to find that contrary to what most people think, the Constitution does not give the Supreme Court the power that the court has assumed, namely interrupting actions and laws regarding their constitutionality. I can't say it any better than Thomas Jefferson:

“To consider the judges as the ultimate arbiters of all constitutional questions [is] a very dangerous doctrine indeed, and one which would place us under the despotism of an oligarchy. Our judges are as honest as other men and not more so. They have with others the same passions for party, for power, and the privilege of their corps. Their maxim is *boni iudicis est ampliare jurisdictionem* [good justice is broad jurisdiction], and their power the more dangerous as they are in office for life and not responsible, as the other functionaries are, to the elective control. The Constitution has erected no such single tribunal, knowing that to whatever hands confided, with the corruptions of time and party, its members would become despots. It has more wisely made all the departments co-equal and co-sovereign within themselves.”

—Thomas Jefferson to William C. Jarvis, 1820. ME 15:277

I think that the recent action of the Supreme Court has set the United States government farther down the pathway to a fascist government.

In my 8th grade history class we studied the Constitution and were required to memorize the Preamble to the Constitution. The preamble doesn't have the force of law, but it sets the tone and the mood of the Constitution.

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

The Supreme Court seems to have a different point of view so I think it is time to change the preamble to match reality.

We the Corporations of the United States, in order to obtain more power, establish fascistic justice, insure domestic obedience, provide for world military dominance, promote the general corporate control, and secure the blessings of control to our majority stockholders and our corporate posterity, do hereby ordain and establish this Constitution for the Fascist States of America.

Protest Song Lands Veteran in Jail: Continued from page 2

Where else would you incarcerate a rapper/soldier who sings about the injustices he has experienced at the hands of his own country? In the Liberty County jail of course. Hall sits in jail in Liberty County, Georgia, not far from Fort Stewart. The Pentagon had Hall put in jail, saying his protest rap lyrics were “communicating a threat”.

Hall had finished his tour of duty for Uncle Sam, and returned

from Iraq. Like any other weary veteran, he looked looking to getting home to his wife and child. So when he was issued a stop-loss order to redeploy he vented his frustration the way artists do, through his art. But Hall was so fed up that he recorded the song and sent it to the Pentagon.

His song does make some strong arguments against Stop-Loss, like: if I do drugs I get kicked out, but if my time is up, I can't get



out? But the Pentagon labeled his action a threat, and had him locked up without bail and now he is facing a court marshal. That seems strange, since Hall says his sergeant originally told him that he liked the rap song and that he didn't consider the lyrics to be something threatening. Some of the lyrics are pretty extreme like:

*When this shit hits the air waves,
Somebody gotta' say fuck you Colonel, captains E-7 and above,
you think you're so much bigger than I am,
I've been too good of an American...*

According to the Democrats.com website, the Pentagon reported that since 2001, approximately 120,000 soldiers have seen their service time extended due to the stop-loss policy. Hall's attorney is a member of the National Lawyers Guild and the Military Law Task Force, and told one journalist that the military was “overreacting,” and that Hall's song is protected by the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech. His attorney went on to explain that his client and other stop-loss victims look at the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as “unending quagmires”, and see themselves as doomed to stay in the service until it kills them, thanks to stop-loss.

To hear Marc Hall's complete rap song in recorded form, or to find information on where to contact him, go to the Iraq veterans Against the War website:<http://www.ivaw.org/node/5753>

(Photo courtesy of Adopt Resistance website (<http://adoptresistance.blogspot.com/2009/12/marc-hall-jailed-for-angry-stop-loss.html>))





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Chapter 56

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VSC: Marc Knipper

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldncer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.

FOGHORN DISTRIBUTION

With this issue VFP56 has decided to begin to distribute the Foghorn, once again, through direct mailing. However, the costs of printing and mailing copies is rising. We are continuing to offer distribution of the Foghorn via the internet as an option.

If you would like to receive the Foghorn through downloading on the internet please let us know. As e-mail addresses change so quickly we need your current address. Please send your e-mail address to turtldncer@aol.com, or cal 707-826-1781 so we can add you to the list of members who wish to take advantage of internet access. Not only do you receive the Foghorn in color, but you will be saving VFP56 funds for other projects.

Thanks in advance for responding to this query so rapidly. We would like to begin to offer both mailing and internet services by the March issue.

Also, just a reminder, VFP56 membership fees were due January 1st in the amount of \$10.00. If you wish to continue your membership please make your check payable to VFP56, P.O. Box 532 Bayside, CA, 95524.

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