



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

Early Childhood Military Education?

By Ann Pelo

Does our national security rely on top-quality early childhood education?

Yes, say the military leaders of Mission: Readiness, an organization led by retired military commanders that promotes investment in education, child health, and parenting support. In March, Mission: Readiness released national and state-by-state education briefs, declaring that “high-quality early education is not only important for the children it benefits but also critical to ensuring our military’s long-term readiness. . . . Investing in high-quality early education is a matter of national security.”

Actually, the generals are right, but for all the wrong reasons.

They see early childhood education as military readiness training. Mission: Readiness argues that investment in early childhood education for at-risk and low-income children will pay off in higher graduation rates and lower incarceration rates—expanding the pool of potential military recruits. “Recruitment and retention challenges could return if America does not do a better job now of producing more young men and women qualified for service,” says the mission statement on the organization’s website. “We must ensure America’s national security by supporting interventions that will prepare young people for a life of military service and productive citizenship.”

Who are the young people for whom these military leaders are supposedly advocating? Low-income, at-risk children—the pool of children from which the military has traditionally recruited. What sort of education do the generals want for these children? Skill-and-drill, standards-driven, assessment-burdened curriculum that prepares children for skill-and-drill basic training, for standards-driven military discipline, for test-based military promotion. The generals’ aim is to prepare low-income children to be soldiers, trained from their youngest years to follow directions and to comply with the strictures issued by the ranking authority. That’s not high-quality education; that’s utilitarian education designed to serve military and economic needs.

This approach to education may prepare young people for a life of military service, but it certainly does not prepare them for citizenship. The Mission: Readiness statement of purpose unwittingly exposes a central conundrum in the organization’s thinking: “The earliest months and years of life are a crucial time when we build the foundation of children’s character, how they relate to others and how they learn.”

Exactly. High-quality early childhood education teaches for citizenship, not for test taking and reductionist assessment. The goal is not compliance but creativity, critical thinking, and compassion. Children are invited to engage meaningful questions in collaboration with others, to embrace complexity, to strive for the well-being of others with generosity, to pay attention to issues of fairness, and to act with courage, conviction, and imagination. Top-flight early education fosters in children dispositions toward empathy, ecological consciousness, engaged inquiry, and collaboration. These are the dispositions of citizens.

Citizens care for their country and its security. They inhabit the commons and they act on behalf of the common good. They are emboldened by personal sovereignty and know themselves to be protagonists in the unfolding history of their country—not passive observers, not dull-minded consumers, not obedient followers of military or government direction, but patriots acting for the good of the commonwealth. Active citizens, thinking critically and compassionately, resist military action as the quick and easy answer to complex challenges. They point out the horrifying absurdity of the idea of “collateral damage.” They fight against imperialism and work for justice nationally and internationally.

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This is the citizenship that our nation needs at this juncture in our evolution. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a gulf slicked with oil, pristine lands on the chopping block for drilling and mining, health care out of reach for nearly a third of our people, unions under siege by state governments and by corporations—our nation needs citizens concerned with national security, with the well-being of our nation. There is much work to be done, and it will take citizens, not soldiers, to do it.

So, yes, because high-quality early childhood education prepares children to be citizens, it is essential to national security. The investment should and must be a national priority.

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Source: http://rethinkingschools.org/archive/25_04/25_04_pelo.shtml

Submitted By Nate Lomba

Morale Plunges Among Troops In Afghanistan

By Gregg Zoroya - USA Today

U.S. troops fighting in Afghanistan are experiencing some of the greatest psychological stress and lowest morale in five years of fighting, reports a military study.

“We’re an Army that’s in uncharted territory here,” said Gen. Peter Chiarelli, Army vice chief of staff, who has focused on combat stress. “We have never fought for this long with an all-volunteer force that’s 1 percent of the population.”

Mental health strain was most severe among veterans of three or more deployments, with a third of those showing signs of psychological problems defined as either stress, depression or anxiety, the report obtained by USA Today says.

The research, based on a survey of soldiers and Marines in 2010, also found that the praise the troops have for their unit sergeants has never been higher as the U.S. approaches the 10th year of its longest war.

The report says decline in individual morale is significant: 46.5 percent of troops said they had medium, high or very high morale, compared with 65.7 percent who said that in 2005. About one in seven soldiers — and one in five Marines — reported high or very high morale.

President Obama ordered a surge of 30,000 troops into Afghanistan last year, bringing the total number to 100,000 troops. He said

at the time that withdrawals would begin this July depending on security. The report says soldiers and Marines reported more intense fighting than during the surge in Iraq in 2006-07, with 75 percent-80 percent of those in Afghanistan involved in fire-fights.

Half or more of those surveyed said they had killed the enemy, and 75 percent-80 percent described the death or wounding of a buddy. Half also said that an improvised explosive device detonated within 55 yards while they were on foot patrol. The study’s researchers also found evidence of physical wear-and-tear with a third of the force experiencing chronic pain.

“I’m not worried about our ability to continue the fight,” Chiarelli said. “Folks who are coming home now are going to see that they’re not going back for 24 months. And that hasn’t been the way it’s been for 10 years.”

Mental health staffing has doubled in Afghanistan since 2009 and troops report better access to this care, though many are so busy fighting “outside the wire” to seek help, the study says.

“Having therapists forward, we’re able to get them to talk to someone right away and intervene,” said Kathleen Chard, a psychologist with the Veterans Affairs Department who trains Army medics. “In as little as two to four sessions we can begin having an impact on these guys and women.”

The report noted that the emotional strain, while high, was lower than expected given the severity of combat — evidence of a growing resilience in the force. And confidence in the command skills of squad and platoon leaders has never been higher at close to 50 percent, up from 38.6 percent in 2005.

“They have learned to be leaders in a crucible,” Chiarelli said. “And their soldiers have seen that.”

Submitted By Jim Sorter

OBOMBA’S “NON-HOSTILE” WAR

Dear VFP Members and Supporters,

Begging your forbearance, I just had to take a break from ongoing administrative duties here at the VFP office to respond to the most recent in a long string of grotesque outrages.

I’m referring to the Obama administration’s response to a federal lawsuit filed by Rep. Dennis Kucinich and 9 other Members of Congress contending the Libyan

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adventure is unconstitutional, as well as a letter from House Speaker Boehner warning the President to observe a deadline in the War Powers Act and get Congressional approval for invading Libya.

The administration's response to Congress -- and I am not joking or borrowing a line from the Daily Show -- is that Mr. Obama can spend a billion dollars bombing the daylight out of Libya based on nothing more than his own authority because:

- it falls short of a "war" in the constitutional sense.
- "U.S. operations do not involve sustained fighting or active exchanges of fire with hostile forces, nor do they involve U.S. ground troops."
- the limited nature of this particular mission is not the kind of 'hostilities' envisioned by the War Powers Resolution.
- U.S. forces are at little risk because there are no troops on the ground and Libyan forces are unable to exchange fire with them meaningfully

The last two "reasons" came from White House Counsel Robert Bauer and State Department legal adviser, Harold Koh, both of whom apparently graduated magnum cum laude from the John "Torture R Us" Yoo School of Law.

Koh, a Yale Law School dean who, before getting corrupted by power in the Obama administration, used to condemn the Bush administration for exactly this kind of criminality, responded to a NY Times reporter with a pitch-perfect echo of those he once criticized, "We are acting lawfully."

Are these people insane? Have they lost touch with reality so completely that they actually believe themselves or think that we do? Have they so little imagination they can't, even for a moment, equate exploding cruise missiles, the red-hot shrapnel of 500-lb. bombs and the terrified screams of children with war? Have they no children of their own nor ever cradled a niece or nephew? Are there no limits to their corrupt delusions?

But more importantly, what does it say about us? We have already seen how one president's ceiling for illegal acts becomes the next president's floor. Congress is complicit with the metastasizing, imperial Obama presidency.

If a humane response does not come from us, from where will it come? Where will we draw the line?

A good place to draw that line will be in Washington, D.C. and other cities beginning October 6, to protest not only 10 years since the invasion of Afghanistan but to fight back against the corporate rule destroying our planet. Come to stay and help create our own American Autumn, our own Tahrir Square where it is needed more than anywhere in the world.

The Times story concluded its coverage of the Obama administration's duplicity with these words, "It was not clear whether the Justice Department had endorsed the White House's interpretation of hostilities." I ask you: Do we care how Obama defines hostilities or shall we define for ourselves what war is, what peace is, what security and sustainability are?

The crime against democracy has been committed. It is plainly before us, waiting, for our response.

Mike Ferner
Interim Director

**VETERANS FOR PEACE NATIONAL
CONVENTION
PORTLAND OREGON
AUGUST 3-7, 2011**

Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, July 7th at
7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held in the
Commons Room at 550 Union
Street in Arcata.
Veterans and non-veterans are
more than welcome to come and
help us dialogue about what we to-
gether can do to bring about peace
in this complex world.



U.S.-Taliban Talks to End War Reported

By Ahmad Massieh Neshat and Jon Gambrell

KABUL, Afghanistan - President Hamid Karzai acknowledged Saturday that the U.S. and Afghan governments have held talks with Taliban emissaries in a bid to end the nation's nearly 10-year war, even as suicide attackers launched a bold assault in the heart of the country's capital, killing nine people.

The attack, which occurred just blocks from Karzai's office, shows the parties have a long way to go to reach a political settlement as the Obama administration weighs a major withdrawal of its forces. The White House neither directly confirmed nor denied Karzai's statement.

Three men wearing camouflage fatigues that are frequently worn by Afghan soldiers stormed a police station near the presidential palace, with one of them detonating an explosives vest just outside the gates as two others rushed inside and began firing, an Interior Ministry statement said.

The crackle of gunfire echoed through the usually bustling streets for about two hours before security forces killed the two remaining attackers. Insurgents killed three police officers, one intelligence agent and five civilians in the attack, according to the ministry statement.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attack in a text message to the Associated Press.

Attacks in the Afghan capital have been relatively rare, although violence has increased since the May 2 killing of Osama bin Laden in a U.S. raid in Pakistan and the start of the Taliban's annual spring offensive.

The last major attack in Kabul took place last month when a suicide bomber wearing an Afghan police uniform infiltrated the main Afghan military hospital in late May, killing six medical students. A month before that, a suicide attacker in an army uniform sneaked past security at the Afghan Defense Ministry, killing three.

Kabul is one of seven areas scheduled to begin to be handed over to Afghan security control in July - part of NATO's efforts to begin transferring security responsibilities ahead of its planned 2014 withdrawal from the country.

The assault occurred shortly after Karzai announced during a speech to youth at the presidential palace that members of his peace council and the U.S. have begun preliminary peace negotiations with the Taliban, which ruled Afghanistan for five years and sheltered al-

Qaida before being driven out of power in the U.S.-led invasion in late 2001.

Reports about such talks have surfaced in recent months, but Karzai's statement was the first public confirmation of U.S. participation. Publicly, the Taliban say there will be no negotiations until foreign troops leave Afghanistan.

"In the course of this year, there have been peace talks with the Taliban and our own countrymen," Karzai said. "Peace talks have started with them already and it is going well. Foreign militaries, especially the United States of America, are going ahead with these negotiations."

President Barack Obama is weighing a range of options for starting the withdrawal of some American forces. The U.S. has roughly 100,000 troops in Afghanistan.

When the president sent an additional 30,000 U.S. forces to Afghanistan at the end of 2009, he did so with the caveat that some of those troops would start coming home in July.

U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said only that the U.S. has "consistently supported an Afghan-led" peace process.

"Over the past two years, we have laid out our red lines for the Taliban: They must renounce violence; they must abandon their alliance with al-Qaida; and they must abide by the constitution of Afghanistan," Toner said. "This is the price for reaching a political resolution and bringing an end to the military actions that are targeting their leadership and decimating their ranks."

Karzai said some Taliban emissaries who have met with members of the peace council he set up last year were only representing themselves, while others were speaking for the broader movement. The exact nature of the contacts was not immediately clear, and Karzai said no government official outside of the council had contact with them.

Karzai's rambling speech was the latest tweak to the U.S.-led coalition trying to control a message about a war grinding toward the decade mark. It likely overstates the progress of the delicate negotiations both his government and others face in identifying and wooing potential Taliban leaders.

Many of the movement's leaders remain either unknown or underground since fleeing Kabul at the start of the U.S.-led invasion. Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Taliban's one-eyed leader, has not been seen publicly since 2001.

Officials also have been duped before. Late last year, a Quetta, Pakistan, shopkeeper posed as the Taliban's former aviation minister, Mullah Mohammed Akhtar Mansour, and met twice with

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Western officials before they realized they had been tricked.

However, such talks may be gaining momentum after the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously Friday to treat al-Qaida and the Taliban separately when it comes to U.N. sanctions, a move aimed at supporting the Afghan government's reconciliation efforts.

Meanwhile, violence persists. Insurgent attacks targeted three convoys ferrying fuel and supplies to NATO troops in western and eastern Afghanistan over the weekend, killing nine Afghan security guards and torching at least 15 fuel tankers, officials said.

In the eastern city of Jalalabad, insurgents kidnapped a provincial council member for Logar province and three of his family members.

Three NATO service members also were killed Saturday - two in southern Afghanistan and one in the east, according to the alliance.

At least 33 international soldiers have died in Afghanistan so far this month, raising the death toll for 2011 to 239.

Report from Fort Leavenworth

By Richard Gilchrist

About 250 demonstrators from various groups showed up for the June 4, rally at Fort Leavenworth to support Bradley Manning.

Most of the demonstrators were from Kansas but there were several from other states. Jeffy Peterson, Leah Bolger and I probably claimed the long distance records. Jeffy is from Oakland, CA and Leah is from Oregon.

We gathered in Bob Dougherty Memorial Park, a small park, which is located about a mile or so away from the front main gate to Fort Leavenworth. While we were at the park waiting for the march to the Fort to begin we listened to spokespeople from a wide range of allied groups including anarchists, anti-war activists (with VFP and Code Pink being the majority), gay rights activists. Each speaker spoke passionately about why we were there and the importance of our demonstrations.

Leah Bolger of Oregon, vice president of Veterans for Peace, spoke about the chilling video that Bradley Manning is said to have given WikiLeaks. The video showed a US helicopter firing upon and killing innocent civilians. "Let's say he did it, then I'm proud of what he did," she said. "He's a hero and he should be given the honor and the glory for what he did."

Brian Wolfe, a Lawrence Kansas-based Army Veteran who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom said, "If a fellow soldier is punished for taking his oath to defend the constitution seriously, what does that mean for our military and for our democracy?"

"The information Bradley Manning is accused of releasing should have been in the public domain. Whoever revealed it is an American hero," said Jeff Paterson who is with the group Courage to Resist.

Courage to Resist has been the leading group pressing the issue of Bradley Manning's illegal treatment and incarceration. The group has been the major group raising money for Manning's defense.

After almost a year it is rumored that they are going to bring charges against Bradley. The court case will be held in Washington DC. There is the possibility that he will face the death penalty, but at this point no one knows what charges will be brought against Manning.

I don't see how he will receive a so-called fair trial given the fact the President Obama in an interview already pronounced him guilty.

From the park we marched, with the VFP front and center, to the main gate of Fort Leavenworth. The demonstration leaders were very careful to keep the group orderly and follow the agreed upon route. We had the usual police escort during the march.

I will have to say that the city police were very friendly and courteous. When we approached the Fort the persona of the police change noticeably. They were all business, The Kansas State Police, the MPs and the Federal Police put on their stern faces, maintained rigid postures and in general tried to look as forbidding as possible. I didn't do a head count but I think we were outnumbered by the police force. They weren't aggressive but we were very carefully not to cross over into the Fort boundary. We were told that they could mean a year in federal prison. So much for the free exercise of liberty.

When we reached the main gate our group spread along the roadway. We held up our signs and sang out with various 'Free Bradley Manning' slogans.

I was surprised at the numerous cars that gave us the peace sign, thumbs up and honked their horns. Of course we had a few drivers gave us the thumbs down or showed their IQ finger.

There was an anti-demonstration of about a dozen people directly across the roadway from us, but they did not seem to have much energy and after several minutes, many of them were in civil conversations with that part of our group that had crossed the street to take up a position on that side of the street.

We stayed in front of the Fort for about an hour, and for this Humboldt type that was about all the heat that I could take. Kansas not only has tornados but it is also can be very hot.

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UPDATE ON THE GOLDEN RULE

With the assistance of master shipwright David Peterson the repairs on the Golden Rule are moving right along. As can be seen from recent photos, many of the old broken planks on the hull have been replaced, and we are now starting on the removal of old flaked paint.

If you have time to spare, and would like to contribute some elbow grease you are always welcome to come lend a hand. Call Jim Sorter 826-1781 or Chuck DeWitt 445-4790 if you are interested in helping.

This project owes a huge amount of thanks for the tremendous efforts of Leroy Zerlang, Chuck DeWitt and Mac McConnell who have spend untold hours working to make our combined dream of once again seeing the Golden Rule sailing the seas in the name of peace.



*Shown are David Peterson and Chuck DeWitt hard at work.
All photographs courtesy of Nate Lomba*



Update from Fort Leavenworth: continued from page 5

I believe that the only way that Bradley Manning will get justice will be if caring people continue public pressure to show that we are watching. Individuals from, across the country and from across the world have sent in Bradley Manning support cards to the Fort Leavenworth and to Quantico when he was imprisoned there.

I think that the demonstration that we held at Quantico in March was important in influencing the authorities to move Bradley from Quantico to Fort Leavenworth.

I'm sure that most of you know that Bradley Quantico received barbaric treatment at Quantico. He was placed in isolation, made to stand nude for most of the day. He was allowed very limited exercise time. All in all, he received the type of treatment that was designed by the FBI's Behavioral Science experts as a disorienting device. Of course, such treatment has been ethically disapproved of as Fascist torture and outlawed by every legislation - up to and including the Supreme Court – throughout the United States. Yet the Obama administration condoned the treatment. Obama seems to have taken lessons from the Bush administration.



Richard Glchrist at Fort Leavenworth protest for Bradley Manning

Bradley conditions have improved since his move to Leavenworth. He is part of the main prison group, and receives the same treatment as all the other prisoners. While I'm sure the conditions are not great at Leavenworth, they are better than being treated like a bug in a jar as he was at Quantico.

In closing, I would like to suggest that everyone mark his or her calendar for Thursday, October 6, 2011. Anti-war activists are going to gather for the tenth anniversary of illegal and immoral U.S. war against Afghanistan.

“We Call on People of Conscience & Courage: All Who Seek Peace, Economic Justice, Human Rights & a Healthy Environment—to join together in Washington, D.C., beginning on Oct. 6, 2011, in nonviolent resistance similar to the Arab Spring and the Midwest awakening. A Concert, Rally & Protest Will Kick Off a Powerful & Sustained Nonviolent Resistance to the Corporate Criminals that

Dominate Our Government.”

For more information: <http://october2011.org>

ACPUNCTURE WILL CONTINUE

For the foreseeable future, acupuncture treatments will continue, and will be offered by JESSICA BAKER and/or JEFF HALOFF at 6:00 p.m. prior to the monthly meetings. Ernie Behm and John Mulloy will have the room set up for them. It's possible to bring in some young vets. We can let these folks know that they are welcome to stay for the meetings. Let us show them our mission is one of peace, that we treat each other with loving kindness.

Jeff Haloff is a licensed acupuncturist and co-founder of Humboldt Veterans Acupuncture Project (HVAP). HVAP provides free “by donation” acupuncture to veterans and their families. Call Jeff at 707-268-8007 with any questions you may have prior to the meeting on Thursday.

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.

~Albert Einstein





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Chapter 56**

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LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

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



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