



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

JUNE
2013

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

JUNE THOMPSON AT PEACE

On the morning of May 16, our beloved June Thompson, a deeply valued member of our chapter of Veteran’s For Peace, passed away.

June was an active force for peace during the 60’s right on up to 2013. She and her husband Bill, retired teachers, help found Humboldt Bay Chapter 56. Her brilliant, loving spirit will be missed by all.

A memorial service is planned for June 1st at 2:00 pm at the Unitarian Fellowship Hall in Bayside. Family and friends are invited to attend to honor June and share our memories, appreciation and sorrow.

AFGHANISTAN SCHOOL FUND RAISER HUGE SUCCESS

By: Judi Rose

The Glimmer of Hope Afghan School Project dance and fundraiser was a fabulous success! There are so many in our generous community to thank. Veterans for Peace Chapter 56 provide the project with name recognition and acts as the umbrella organization for non-profit status. Attendees danced the night away to the jazzy music of Bayou Swamis. Delicious Afghan food was served by Lauren Sarabia of Comfort of Home Catering. Jan West, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Afghanistan decorated the hall with her impressive collection of Afghan souvenirs. Michael Welch and Jere Cox lent their expertise as beer consultants and Mad River Brewing Company donated beer. Mashaw McGuinnis, local writer, put the GHASP story in print and had it published. It was a “peace” I used time and time again to publicize the event. Businesses and individuals, too numerous to name here but who will receive a personal thank you, generously donated a plethora of items and services for the silent auction and raffle which Jane Riggan of VFP56 helped organize. Raven Cziglenyi, one of my former students and her dad Tobin took charge of the letter writing and art table. Mid-evening they passed the responsibility on to Dylan Hutt, another of my former students. Eight AFS high school students from across the globe, volunteered in the kitchen as part

of their National Day of Service. Many community members kept the event running smoothly as they volunteered in various capacities throughout the evening. Judging by the success of the event local TV, radio and publications did a great job spreading the word.

Thank you to my daughter Erika Rose and her fiancé, Don Hoeler for not only taking charge the night of the fundraiser but for their loving support during Sunny’s year of deployment. Sunny Rose and his Afghan interpreter are to be commended for the humanitarian bond they developed, treating one another with respect and integrity while serving in the midst of political war. The stories of their friendship shared with their families back home are what inspired this project.

With the money raised, \$1500 has been sent directly to our friends, the teachers in Afghanistan. They will purchase and distribute school supplies to two thousand female students. \$1000 has been put in the interpreter’s college fund to help pay for his tuition and books at the college he attends in Canada, where he now lives with his wife and children. \$500 was given to Veterans for Peace Chapter 56 to help fund the fourth annual Peace Poetry Contest for local high school students to be held Sunday, May 19, 3:00 p.m. at the Unitarian Fellowship in Bayside. The remainder has been used to cover all expenses related to the fundraiser.

I’d like to end this letter with words from a letter sent with a donation from a local father in memory of his son-in-law, a schoolmate of my children, recently killed in action in Afghanistan. “Thanks for your creative work! Projects like yours are the solution to our social conflicts and apparent divisions. Ultimately all of the families of the world are looking for the same thing – love, peace and happiness.”

Sincerely,
Judith Rose
822-2142



WHEELCHAIR AVAILABLE

A generous person is donating a Inva-care wheelchair 18" x 18" frame with 24" rear wheels to a veteran who is in need of one. The chair originally cost \$3,758.00 but it is being offered free to the right person.

If you could use this chair, contact 707-826-1781 for further information.

GOLDEN RULE MAY REPORT

By: Chuck DeWitt

TO ALL:

MR. CHRIS BARRY FROM SHAMUS'S BBQ RESTAURANT HAS THE PLANS AND SOME OF THE MATERIALS NEEDED TO CONSTRUCT THE BUTTERFLY SKYLIGHT FOR THE CABIN. BEFORE WE CAN INSTALL IT THE CABIN NEEDS TO BE FIBER GLASSED, FAIRED AND PAINTED. AS OF TODAY WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH CASH ON HAND TO PURCHASE THE MATERIALS REQUIRED. PETER AND BRECKIN HAVE FINISHED FILLING AND SANDING THE SCREW HOLES ON THE CABIN. THE TRIM FOR THE TRANSOM HAS BEEN ATTACHED AND FINISHING TOUCHES ARE BEING MADE AS OF TODAY. THE BOTTOM OF THE HULL IS ALMOST READY FOR ANOTHER COAT OF BOTTOM PAINT AND THE HULL ABOVE THE WATER LINE IS READY FOR ANOTHER COAT OF PRIMER. MIKE HAS DONE SOME FINISHING WORK ON THE BOW SPRIT.. WE NEED PERHAPS FIVE MORE COATS OF LACQUER ON THE TRANSOM AND IT WILL BE READY FOR THE NAME AND HOME PORT.

ERIC ALMQUIST IS SEARCHING FOR LONG PIECES OF SPRUCE NEEDED TO BUILD THE MAIN MAST BUT EVEN WHEN HE LOCATES THEM WE STILL ARE SHORT OF FUNDS TO BUY THEM. BILL EASTWOOD HAS DRAWN PLANS FOR THE INSIDE OF THE CABIN. THE PLANS HAVE BEEN ENLARGED AND LAMINATED AND POSTED INSIDE THE BOAT HOUSE FOR ALL TO SEE. WE DO HAVE SOME MATERIAL TO START BUILDING BUNKS, TABLE, BULK HEADS, CABINETS, DRAWERS, AND OTHER THINGS BELOW DECK. WE HAVE CLEARED THE SHOP AREA SO WE HAVE ROOM TO START SMALL ITEMS BUT BECAUSE OF THE LIMITATIONS OF THE HATCH ONLY SOME THINGS CAN ACTUALLY BE CONSTRUCTED OUT SIDE OF THE CABIN, MOST WILL NEED TO BE BUILT INSIDE.

ELECTRICAL WIRING SHOULD BE STARTED IMMEDIATELY. WE SHOULD PERHAPS HAVE A MEETING TO DECIDE JUST WHAT WE ACTUALLY NEED SO THAT WE CAN PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AND HAVE THE WIRES IN PLACE WHEN WE NEED TO CONNECT WHATEVER IS REQUIRED. THERE IS SOME FINISHING WORK TO BE DONE INSIDE THE CABIN AS WELL AND VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED. WE ALSO NEED TO DO SOME FINISH PAINTING INSIDE BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE IS STARTED. THANKS TO MIKE, PETER AND BRECKIN, WE ARE STILL MOVING FORWARD, EVEN WITH OUT MONEY.....

RESPECTFULLY CHUCK DEWITT.....



US Lawyer Exposes Abuse Tactics at Gitmo as Hunger Strike Enters 4th Month

By: Clive Stafford Smith

As the hunger strike by captives at US military's Guantanamo prison enters its 4th month, one of the inmates' attorneys has revealed deliberate abuse and torture tactics adopted against the detainees to discourage them from contacting their lawyers.

Clive Stafford Smith, attorney for several Guantanamo captives and founder of legal group Reprieve elaborated Thursday on some of the abusive tactics uses against inmates at the notorious detention and torture camp, including humiliating invasive body searches, which he describes as "sexual assault," that they have to undergo merely to make telephone contact with their attorneys.

"When my clients are coming to have a telephone call with me they can't smuggle anything on a telephone line," said Smith in an interview with RT. "And so the idea that they threaten the prisoners with full body search, and I won't go into the really graphic part, but it's basically a sexual assault, is just a threat to try to get them not to talk to us."

He then emphasized that such abusive and inhumane tactics are part of an effort by the US military to prevent release of any negative information about the infamous prison.

"Frankly," he added, "the reason for this is fairly obvious; that there's been an awful lot of information coming out of Guantanamo Bay that doesn't suit the [American] authorities.

Smith further revealed that military authorities at Guantanamo have actually adopted their abusive measures against Muslim prisoners at the prison camp after conducting a study on what Muslim men are particularly sensitive to.

"What's sad about it is of course people at Guantanamo have studied what Muslim men are particularly sensitive to, and so one thing that obviously a conservative traditional Muslim male is not used to is having a stranger basically assault them sexually," he said.

"These things have been studied rather carefully," he added, "so it's a great tragedy that the US has used studies on how to be sensitive to Muslims and turned these around to use them to humiliate them."

Noting that the threat of the so-called "anal cavity search" has only been adopted by US military authorities since 10 to 12 days ago, Smith underlined its immediate impact on the captives, discouraging them from making even phone contacts with their at-

torneys.

"Last Friday two of my clients refused to have a call with me for the simple reason that they didn't want to go through that process" he said, adding that "twice prisoners didn't want to come out for a visit" with another lawyer from his organization, Reprieve, who was at the base last week "because of what they've been threatened with."

"This is just not civilized. I speak as an American when I say we should not be doing this sort of thing," he then emphasized.

Smith went on to reiterate that the new force-feeding procedures used on hunger strikers at Guantanamo has been dictated by US military's Southern Command with the intent to "make it more painful for prisoners" to continue with their protest effort.

"I'm actually glad that a standard operating procedure for Guantanamo Bay was leaked this Monday... and it corroborates everything my clients have been telling me about how the force-feeding is being done. And you know what's really worrying about this is General Bantz Craddock of SOUTHCOM said they were doing it to make it "inconvenient" for the prisoners to keep on hunger striking," he said.

Noting that in earlier days Guantanamo staff used a smaller, 120-cm-long tube up a captive's nose, he added, "Now what they are doing is they are using larger tubes and they are sticking those up one's nose twice a day and pulling them out again."

On possible ways to bring an end to the ongoing hunger strike at the US military prison, Smith emphasized that "we have to give justice to these prisoners."

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, June 6th 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.



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“We are talking about 96 of the 166 prisoners, who have been cleared for release, and that’s 52 percent of them, including most of the people I represent. There’s only one way to end this strike fairly, and that’s to take prisoners who’ve been cleared for release and set them free... That’s the only way to solve this problem.”

Most of the Guantanamo inmates have been picked up by American military forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the aftermath of the US-led occupation of Afghanistan under the pretext of removing the Saudi- and Pakistani-backed Taliban regime and bringing stability to the country.

Because They Can: Three Rapes Every Hour in The Military

By: Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite,

Rape in the military is like rape in civilian life. Rapists rape because they can, because the stigma is placed on the victim not the rapist. And the more closed and hierarchical an institution is, the more the victim is stigmatized and the rapist gets away with it. This is what happens in the church and it is what happens in the military.

I have done volunteer rape crisis counseling as a pastor, and have written about the multiple crises inherent in sexual assault, in my chapter on rape and healing with ethicist Mary Pellauer.

Sexual predators love secrecy, they thrive on it. Therefore, the first thing that has to happen is that the cover-up must end. Just as with child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, that doesn’t end the abuse, but ending the secrecy can become the beginning, a way to move toward justice for those who have been victimized, and ultimately to prevention and change.

Today there’s no hiding the staggering numbers on sexual assault in the military any more. The Pentagon has just released a new report that shows sexual assaults in the military are up sharply, up to the rate of 70 per day. That translates into almost three rapes every hour, all day long, all night long, every twenty-four hours.

This shocking report comes just after the Air Force officer in charge of the Air Force’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office was charged with sexual battery, and following a string of reports on sexual assault in the military, especially in the Air Force.

President Obama has expressed frustration with the failure of the Pentagon to effect change. The President also said he had instructed Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel “to step up our game exponentially” to prevent sex crimes in the military and hold offenders accountable

The military, like many institutional churches, is a closed system. Change cannot come from within and it has not. The Service Women’s Action Network fact sheet on “Rape, Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in the Military” states there have been “25 years of Pentagon studies, task forces, and congressional hearings” and this violence continues to occur at “alarming rates.”

The military system cannot fix itself from the inside, because the culture itself has produced this result. Rape culture in the military is a product of the gender and power relations in military culture.

Cultures change slowly, but they do not change at all without outside pressure. That is why the approach of the Service Women’s Action Network is an example of how to get the kind of change that is needed. It is a classic civil rights approach, where the voices and agency of servicewomen and women veterans drives the work. They recommend that service members be allowed access to civil courts in these kinds of cases.

In regard to military sexual assault it is absolutely crucial to take the prosecution of the accused out of the chain of command and allow service members access to civil courts. Both women and men are sexually assaulted in the military, so this must apply to all in the services. To get real change, you have to actually take investigation and prosecution outside the current culture.

BriGette McCoy, a former Army specialist, testified before the Senate Armed Services committee’s subcommittee on personnel about being raped and sexually harassed in the military.

Her words illustrate why a closed system like the military will never be able to reform itself:

“I no longer have any faith or hope that the military chain of command will consistently prosecute, convict, sentence and carry out the sentencing of sexual predators in uniform without absconding justice somehow,” she said.

Military rapists rape because they can. That has to stop being the case. Take the investigation and prosecution of rape in the military out of the chain of command. Consult the excellent website Protect our Defenders for support and advocacy information.

Three rapes every hour in the military is an outrage. We don’t need more Pentagon “action” or congressional hearings, and we don’t need more promises. We need real change.

Susan Thistlethwaite, M.Div., Ph.D., is Professor of Theology and former President at Chicago Theological Seminary. She is also a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress. Her newest book is OccupytheBible: What Jesus Really Said (and Did) About Money and Power.



Bradley Manning Update: How to Commit Espionage Without Trying!

By: Alfredo Lopez

If it wasn't clear up to now, it was made crystal clear three weeks ago. The co-defendant in the Bradley Manning trial is the Internet itself.

In one of the case's most disturbing pre-trial hearings, Judge Col. Denise Lind ruled that prosecutors can offer as evidence files seized from Osama Bin Laden's computer as well as the testimony of a Navy Seal, part of the Bin Laden assassination team, who found them. His identity will not be revealed and the defense can cross-examine him only from a very specific and limited list of court-approved questions.

The ruling is important not only because it shows the almost unimaginable absurdity of the Manning case but because it reveals the true intent of the Obama Administration in pursuing it.

The hearing was about the "standard of proof" necessary to prove two charges: espionage and aiding the enemy. It also took up what kinds of evidence would be permitted in the trial to support those charges.

According to the prosecutors, Manning committed espionage and aided the enemy by giving them important intelligence and he did that by putting it on the Internet. That's it; that's the crime. His real intent is irrelevant. The government is arguing that, if you put something on the Internet that some nefarious rascal downloads, you are effectively aiding that person materially in any "relevant" crime he or she might commit. It doesn't matter if there's no evidence that the person read it and no need to prove that you intended for him or her to retrieve it. Effectively, it makes the use of the Internet a potential crime.

Judge Lind ruled that to prove "espionage" you have to show that the defendant actually intended for this material to be read by the enemy; that was a defeat for the prosecution. But, she ruled, the government can pursue its theory to support the "aiding the enemy" charge.

One up and one down for Pvt. Manning. Two down for the rest of us. The Judge's decision is important for the trial but what's most important for all of us is what the Obama Administration is thinking and doing. It's now clear that the Administration believes that these very same acts and standards apply to both crimes. While the "aiding the enemy" charge only relates to military personnel, the "espionage" charge can be levelled at everyone and, while it failed to win the ruling in this case, it's clear that President Obama believes he can charge any of us with "espionage" for using the Internet as it's currently used.

For those who aren't familiar with this case or need an update, Pvt. Bradley Manning is a whistle-blower. Sometime in 2010, when he was working as an information technologist with the Army, Manning sent about 750,000 computer files to Wikileaks.

These included a shocking video of a U.S. Air Force helicopter firing at a wedding party in Bagdad, killing several people, and then firing at an ambulance there to evacuate the injured. All the while, ground support and helicopter personnel laughed and encouraged the pilot to "kill" and "shoot" the people, as if playing a video game with real humans as targets. The video became a major embarrassment to Washington and, while there was a lot about the Wikileaks revelations that made Washington very unhappy, this video provoked the final pull on the trigger. The U.S. government determined to go after Wikileaks and the source of this classified material.

A short while after turning over the material, Manning began corresponding and chatting on-line with Adrian Lamo, a technologist who had built a reputation for hacking into corporate servers, telling the company about it through an intermediary and then offering to fix the vulnerability for money. Lamo befriended Manning, spending hours with him in on-line chat rooms and email talking about the difficulties Manning was having. Manning is gay, he told his new friend, and he found the often homophobic military culture punishing. But, he also told Lamo, he had all these documents that made clear how wrong the war in Iraq was and holding that truth from the world was eating at him so he finally published them.

Upon reading that, Lamo turned Manning in and the torturous case began.

Manning doesn't deny he leaked the files and, in fact, he has already pleaded guilty to that charge, a plea the judge is still considering. He's explained his actions in an audio tape smuggled out of jail and published by Democracy Now. The tape is stunning for what it says about the information and about Bradley Manning.

This is a case, after all, in which homophobia has already played a major role. It's hard to think of any public figure who has been as "preference-maligned" as Manning by both the government and the media. Almost every article published about the case pictures him as a confused, frightened gay man, an emotional cripple and weakling who was pushed to the point of near-suicide by a military system he couldn't adjust to. That condition, the mainstream media tells us, was exacerbated by the torturous treatment Manning received during his time in jail, much of it spent in solitary confinement.

This largely unchallenged gay-bashing, sketching an image that meshes just about every homophobic bias plaguing our culture, took an uglier step when pundits started asking an over-loaded question: why was a kid who was on the verge of a crack-up allowed access to such sensitive information?

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This attack campaign encountered a devastating challenge when Manning finally spoke to us in that tape, emerging as a completely controlled, thoughtful, highly principled and courageous hero. Despite the brutal treatment he had endured, he sounded confident and strong as iron.

"I believed that if the general public, especially the American public, had access to the information," he explained, "this could spark a domestic debate on the role of the military and our foreign policy in general, as well as it related to Iraq and Afghanistan." Sounds like a real jelly-bean, huh?

Bradley Manning knew exactly what he was doing, had a good reason for doing it and appears ready to do his time (up to 20 years if the plea is accepted) as an act of conscience and civil disobedience. Such actions form a critical component of the history of this country -- the kind of actions that drove the civil rights movement that, among other things, made Barack Obama's election possible. But that's a chapter of our history the President apparently hasn't read.

Instead of recognizing this act of conscience, the government churlishly continues to charge Manning with two criminal acts that are among the most serious any citizen faces. Manning denies them both and that's what the trial is about.

In truth, it's tough to take the "espionage" charge seriously in this case. Nobody has presented one fact that indicates that he's guilty of any such thing and the Judge rejected the argument that all Manning had to do to be found guilty was put this material on the Internet. But it's the evidence that U.S. prosecutors say would support both charges that should send a chill up our collective spine. They claim that Manning gave this material to Wikileaks knowing that it could be picked up by terrorists, particularly Bin Laden-led Al Qaeda. That, the government argues, is giving the enemy material and informational aid and is also an act of espionage.

What does that mean for the rest of us? We all put information on the Internet. Some of us, seeking to shine light on the truth, publish information the government doesn't want us to. This can be "whistle-blowing" or it can just be good journalism or fact-finding. Journalists often do that and, in fact, they have often been encouraged to. In the age of the Internet, the number of people doing that has exploded. The Internet makes us all potential journalists.

Now, if a criminal downloads information we publish, we may be considered complicit in that person's crimes.

How the government will apply this theory remains to be seen and courts, judges and lawyers will be thrashing it out for a long time as the rest of us watch with more than "observer status". But there is a greater threat that lurks behind the very concept involved here. The Obama Administration seeks to curtail the very functionality that

makes the Internet the effective source of communication it currently is. It wants to destroy the Internet as we know it.

Once you put something in a public place on-line everybody has access to it. That isn't an abuse or weakness of the Internet; it's the very essence of its power and purpose. It was developed as an unfettered, free and world-accessible system of information gathering and exchange. It's why you use the Internet the way you do -- because you can get information on virtually every topic imaginable.

Think about it. Before the Internet, if you had a question about something or some information you needed, you would plow through books and articles and call people hoping they knew what you needed to know. You might try to remember what television program made mention of the sought-after info and then have to figure out how to retrieve it. Much of the time, you would scratch your head and, if you're like me, give up. Our access to information was restricted because information was not yet fully collaborative. The world was still informationally divided into naturally restricted cells of competence or access to information.

The Internet changed all that. Where do you start if you need information? You use an on-line search engine and the websites your searches uncover. Then you click links on those sites to others that might deepen your knowledge. You can keep going almost infinitely, deeper and wider, because the knowledge and experience of the world's entire population is available and accessible to you. We have collectivized knowledge and, because knowledge is the seed of social change, the Internet is a critical tool in the struggle for our future.

President Obama, however, contends that it is effectively dangerous and the position his minions have articulated is rabidly repressive. Anything you put on the Internet, at any time, could be read by a terrorist or criminal and, if the government can prove that information had some potential relationship to that crime and the criminal got access to it, you are an accessory. If the criminal has been designated as an enemy of the United States, even if your information pre-dates that designation, you can be considered a traitor.

Some might argue that there is a limit: Obama lawyers are contending that this material was illegally released and materially helpful to a terrorist. But can you really predict what information will be used in a crime in the future? How do you know, when you publish information, that some nut-case isn't going to download it later on? And who in the world is going to decide that any information is illegally released? What happens if you've published information that some government functionary decides, at some later date, to label "top secret"? Or some University official or a corporate employee stamps "not for public consumption"?

That, by the way, is what they were trying to throw Aaron Swartz in jail for 35 years for.

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Who decides? Well, the government does and that is something we can't abide. Making a government the final arbiter of what should and shouldn't be seen on the Internet is corrosive of democracy. Claiming that merely publishing information is effectively terrorism is a nightmarish trashing of protected communications. This case demonstrates that, when it comes to world-wide communications, the U.S. government is a very dangerous force.

Suicide Claims More US Military Lives Than Afghan War

By: James Cogan

American military personnel are continuing to take their own lives in unprecedented numbers, as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq drag on. By late November, at least 334 members of the armed forces had committed suicide in 2009, more than the 319 who were killed in Afghanistan or the 150 who died in Iraq. While a final figure is not available, the toll of military suicides last year was the worst since records began to be kept in 1980.

The Army, National Guard and Army Reserve lost at least 211 personnel to suicide. More than half of those who took their lives had served in either Iraq or Afghanistan. The Army suicide rate of 20.2 per 100,000 personnel is higher than that registered among males aged 19 to 29, the gender age bracket with the highest rate among the general population. Before 2001, the Army rarely suffered 10 suicides per 100,000 soldiers.

The Navy lost at least 47 active duty personnel in 2009, the Air Force 34 and the Marine Corp, which has been flung into some of the bloodiest fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, 42. The Marine suicide rate has soared since 2001 from 12 to at least 19.5 per 100,000.

For every death, at least five members of the armed forces were hospitalised for attempting to take their life. According to the Navy Times, 2 percent of Army; 2.3 percent of Marines and 3 percent of Navy respondents to the military's own survey of 28,536 members from all branches reported they had attempted suicide at some point. The "Defense Survey of Health-Related Behaviors" also found "dangerous levels" of alcohol abuse and the illicit use of drugs such as pain killers by 12 percent of personnel.

The trigger for a suicide attempt varied from case to case: relationship breakdowns, financial problems, substance abuse, tensions with other members of their unit, a traumatic event. What is clear, however, is that military service has seriously impacted on the physical and mental health of the victims.

The suicide figures for serving personnel are only one indication. The most alarming statistics are those on mental illness related to the hundreds of thousands of veterans of the two wars who have left the military and sought to reintegrate into civilian life.

While there is no exact figure, studies estimate that as many as

20 to 30 percent of veterans suffer some degree of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), hindering their ability to hold down jobs, maintain relationships, overcome substance abuse and, in some cases, maintain their will to live. The worsening economic conditions facing working people in the US are aggravating the difficulties.

A survey last year found that at least 15 percent of former soldiers in the 20 to 24 age bracket were unemployed. An article by the Florida Today site on January 3 reported that 450 of the 800 homeless in Brevard County were Iraq or Afghanistan veterans. Shelters in California are reporting twice as many requests for assistance from new veterans compared with 2007. At the current rate, they will eventually outnumber the more than 100,000 homeless Vietnam vets.

A study of veterans with PTSD published last August by the Journal of Traumatic Stress found that 47 percent had had suicidal thoughts before seeking treatment and 3 percent had attempted to kill themselves. The US Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has been compelled to substantially upgrade its services. Since its 24-hour, seven-days a week suicide hotline was belatedly established in July 2007, it has counselled over 185,000 veterans or their families and claims to have prevented at least 5,000 suicides. It now has 400 counselors dedicated to suicide prevention though even the Pentagon admits far more are needed.

People who served in either Iraq or Afghanistan make up a growing proportion of the 6,400 veterans that VA estimates take their own lives each year. A 2007 CBS study put the rate among male veterans aged 20 to 24 at four times the national average—more than 40 per 100,000 per year.

The suicide estimates do not include the hundreds of young veterans who die each year in auto accidents, many of which are linked with excessive speed or driving under the influence and kill or injure others as well. In 2008, veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan were 75 percent more likely to die in an auto accident than non-veterans and 148 percent more likely to die in a motorcycle crash. Suicide statistics also do not count deaths that are classified as accidental drug-related overdoses.

American society will continue to pay for the harm caused by the Iraq and Afghan wars for decades to come. There is a growing medical consensus that a significant factor in PTSD is actual physical damage to the brain. Developments in vehicle and body armour, combined with advances in medical treatment, have enabled thousands of soldiers to survive bomb blasts that might have taken their lives in earlier conflicts. They survive with trauma to their brain however.

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury estimated in early 2009 that between 45,000 to 90,000 veterans of the two wars had been left with "severe and lasting symptoms" of brain injury.





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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.

Brian Willson Fasting For Guantanamo

For your information, I have started on an indefinite 300 calorie a day fast in solidarity with Diane Wilson who is fasting on water only in front of the White House in solidarity with the Guantanamo hunger strikers. This may go on for quite awhile. I do not have any specific plans for ending the fast at this moment but there may be a joint statement agreed upon soon. I have my food regimen worked out very specifically with my trainer to cover all my essential nutritional needs on 300 calories a day. There isn't much food, but it is sufficient.

Bo Boudart will be here doing some more filming and interviewing with me, May 20 and 21. There are a few of us who expect to begin publicly vigiling somewhere in downtown Portland with our large and colorful banner, Hunger For Justice, Close Guantanamo, probably everyday. I will likely be part of it for 3 or 4 hours a day as a general rule.

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