



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

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2017

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

My Enemy, My Friend

By Jon Reisdorf

“Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?” Abraham Lincoln

I have this bumper sticker on my car: “I destroy my enemies when I make them my friends.” It’s a belief central to both religion and the humanities. And it’s a maxim that has stood me in good stead as a counselor on the GI Rights Hotline. Beyond a knowledge of rules and regulations governing the various branches of the US military, much of my day to day work is about empathy. Professor Simon Baron-Cohen speaking of his book, *The Science of Evil: On Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty*: “One of my motivations for writing this book was to persuade you that empathy is one of the most valuable resources in our world....Empathy is a universal solvent. Any problem immersed in empathy becomes soluble....”. I stand by these words.

That approach certainly had a workout on January 18th when I received a call back from a brigade commander Lt. Colonel Oscar del Rosa. “I don’t know who you are or who you represent and frankly I don’t care. But you need to cease and desist calling around my base stirring up trouble. I don’t want to talk to you. I am going to give you my email and I expect you to email me an explanation.” Not exactly an auspicious beginning.

At that point I honestly wasn’t sure who this guy was. Over the last few days I had made several calls to various people at his base. He was probably right. I was stirring about a lot of trouble at his base. Frankly, I don’t care about the niceties of following the chain of command. Earlier that day I had a call into the chief of staff of the commanding general of the entire base, a full bird colonel and this guy was certainly not him. I said in response: “I’m sorry who did you say you are?” He spit out his name and then had to repeat it three times, his Spanish surname - not del Rosa - was really long and complicated and it didn’t help my cause that he had to spell it out to me letter by letter. I then told him that I would honor his request and send an email but I really needed to know what I did that had so offended him so I could respond properly.

He explained that by making calls all over the base, up and down the chain of command and in out of his brigade I was stirring up a lot of his people and those in other commands for no good reason. Specifically he wanted to know why I was accusing of one of his Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) under his command of abusing soldiers without bringing it up to him first.

“Look,” I said. “I see why you are angry at me. I would be angry too. No one wants a trouble maker talking to the wrong people about a problem that has absolutely nothing to do with them and that they can not possibly solve. I get that. But you must understand my point of view, my intention. I received a call from a soldier training at your base in crisis and saying she had no one else to turn too. She called me expressing suicidal ideation after abuse by her platoon sergeant. I spoke to him and things got worse for her. I then looked up the base directory and got some numbers and just started calling folks. I don’t know anything about the chain of command at your base and I don’t care. My process is to talk to anyone who will talk to me until I find someone who will help my client.”

Del Rosa was still very defensive. He immediately attacked me on the mention of suicide. When that girl told me she was suicidal why didn’t I call 9-11? he asked. Why mess with this soldier’s life putting her at risk? Where was my ethics?

I explained that I am a counselor with the GI Rights Hotline and volunteer for the Civilian Medical Resources Network under the tutelage of Howard Waitzkin a highly regarded psychiatrist with decades of experience. CMRN has never lost a case to suicide and neither had I. I have been trained in suicide intervention. So when she called I assessed the risk factors. No

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attempt and no plan. At that time she said no prior suicide attempt either. So I established rapport and got a life contract: She promised not to hurt herself and to call me if she felt she might. I gave her my home phone number, my cell and my email. And I told her that I would call her every day until she felt that things were back under control. She then shared some things that happened to her that made me think she was not safe where she was and that I needed to intervene.

Del Rosa was calmer by now but bristled at my last statement. "She has had all the care she needs and is now in the hospital. Your client is lying to you and..." I did not let him finish. I angrily interrupted him announcing that I was sick and tired of hearing that from NCOs at his base. I believed her when she said that Platoon Sergeant Belt told her to quit crying, stop lying and get with the program. I believed her because Belt and others under Del Rosa told me that she was a liar. In another conversation the brigade's Command Master Sergeant Conrad after several minutes of back and forth finally blurted out that he was certain she was lying and here is why. She had list of what to say to get out of the army and was going down the list. She was currently hospitalized because when she got to the item on the list where she expresses suicidal ideation the NCO had to act. After my conversation with Conrad I remembered that creating and using a list was my idea. When people are fragile it is hard to organize their thoughts so I told her to write them down in a list format.

I suggested to Del Rosa that calling my client a liar was partly responsible for driving her to threaten suicide. After Platoon Sergeant Belt was verbally abusing my client another NCO was present who made the call to 9-11. Was this poisonous attitude of Belt coming from his immediate boss Command Master Sergeant Conrad or from him? Del Rosa was quiet for a few beats before speaking. No, he said. The Command Master Sergeant's and Belt's comments to me were completely out of line. And he would investigate what happened with Sergeant Belt and my client. He had the incident report in front of him and in it Sergeant Belt said he called 9-11 and didn't mention the other NCO who was present having to make the call because Belt was berating my client. I gave Del Rosa the names of all the people that I knew to be present in the incident landing my client in the ER.

I then explained to Del Rosa that often times we are not dealing with lying so much as people speaking out of their perceptions of events. I then shared with him parts of my client's story that he and his NCOs didn't know but that she

had authorized me to share. My client was gang raped in high school at a party when she was 15. The police said the sex was consensual. Her mother sided with the police and blamed her. That led to a suicide attempt. She did not share that with her recruiter. Had it been related she would not have been allowed to be in the army. Out of fear of being charged with a fraudulent enlistment she did not share this story with behavioral health (BH) at reception (MEPs) before basic training when she suffered her first panic attack. MEPS pushed her on to basic training. At basic training panic attacks and suicidal thoughts became a daily occurrence. Once again behavioral health ignored her and pushed her on. Which led her to this base where the pattern was continuing until it came to a head on Monday.

From day one she has dealt with assertions and insinuations from NCOs and BH "therapists" from MEPS, Basic Training until today that she was faking it and making up her panic attacks, depression and suicidal ideation. I repeated to him his earlier statement that my client was getting all the help she needed. Here is what I heard from her. After repeatedly telling her that she was faking her mental health problems the therapist dutifully put her on suicide watch. That action based on a required risk assessment became a form of harassment. Every hour someone pounded on her door and yelled at her to say she was okay.

After hearing about her mistreatment at BH, something I found all too common, I got her a Civilian Medical Resources Network evaluation which found PTSD, suicidal ideation, panic attack syndrome and major depression which I shared with the BH therapist and her boss on a conference call. And I told them that in my opinion they were complicit in the abuse committed by platoon sergeant Belt. Further I told him that Command Master Sergeant Conrad undermined her wellness by his attitudes which because of his lofty position was accepted by most of the other NCOs. I then shared the conversation last week that I had with Belt. If he was that abrasive and rude with me I can only imagine how he is with the poor folks who serve under him. And I shared many, many stories of other cases similarly abused by NCOs. Marine Drill Instructors who dressed down suicidal recruits in front of their platoon for requesting help from behavioral health. The DI told one of my Marine clients to either kill himself or shut up about it. Speaking in terms of stories remains my main strategy and it works.

Del Rosa was quite apologetic at this point. He asserted that outside of a few bad apples people under his command

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really do care about their troops. I then shared my approach on the Hotline. When I advocate for a service member I look for numbers off base websites and call whatever numbers show up. I start with a clerk. I routinely ask who in the office really cares about the troops and they always say you want to talk to Captain so and so or Colonel this or that. When a clerk tells me that I get the number and make the call. And so far I find that the clerks are right. Since I started doing using this strategy I have always found someone who bends over backward to help my client. I had not found that person at his base until now. I said I believed he was that person.

At those point del Rosa was now a friend. He promised me that he would remind his NCOs tomorrow at his morning briefing that when a soldier says they are suicidal or even has suicidal ideation whether they believe they are lying or not they are ordered to call 9-11 and have them taken to the ER. Anyone calling a suicidal soldier a liar will be fired. He was very passionate about this point. He shared the horror of one of his NCOs killing himself which haunts him to this day. So I believe him.

But the open question for me is will my client? Will she be able to leave what is a safe space in the hospital to return to what she sees as a highly dangerous environment? I am not sure. I am afraid she will go AWOL if they try to make her go back. Stay tuned to this space for updates on my client's case.

Punishing Seniors for Protesting

By Ann Wright

Governments go pretty low to silence dissent—curtailing one's travel to neighboring countries and, now, stopping Social Security checks.

In 2005 and 2006, the Bush administration put some of us protesting Bush's war on Iraq into the National Crime Information Data base. Yes, we had been arrested for failure to comply with orders to move from the fence in front of the White House during protests against the war on Iraq, torture at Guantánamo and other U.S. prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan or sitting in ditches at Bush's Crawford, Texas, ranch. These were misdemeanors, not felonies, yet we were put on the FBI's international crime list, a list for felony violations.

Canada is the only country that seems to use the list— and they use it to deny entry into Canada. At the request of Canadian parliamentarians to challenge Canada's compliance with the Bush administration's political retaliation list, I made another trip to Canada to test it and was expelled from Canada in 2007. The Canadian immigration officer told me as he was putting me unceremoniously on the flight back to the United States, "An expulsion is not as bad as being deported. At least each time you want to attempt to come into Canada, you can undergo 3–5 hours of interrogation answering the same questions as the last time you attempted to enter, and you might get an exemption to the expulsion. With a deportation, you will never get in." Over the past six years, I have gone through the lengthy interrogation twice: I was given a 24-hour exemption to the expulsion when accompanied by a Canadian parliamentarian and a Canadian Broadcasting TV crew filming the event, and I received a two-day exemption in order to speak at several Canadian universities.

Under the Obama administration, the latest effort to silence dissent, for those of you 62 or older, takes the form of someone in the government falsifying jail records to show that you were in jail/confinement for more than 30 days and sending the records to the Social Security Administration. SSA will then stop your monthly Social Security check and demand that you repay months of payments received during the time you were allegedly in jail—in my case \$4,273.60.

On March 31, 2016, along with six Veterans for Peace and one Granny Peace Brigade member, I was arrested at

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, March 2nd at
7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held at 24 Uni-
tarian Fellowship Way, Bayside,
Jacoby Creek Road. Veterans and
non-veterans are more than wel-
come to come and help us dialogue
about what we together can do to
bring about peace in this complex
world.



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Creech drone base in Nevada when I participated in the semi-annual protest against assassin drones. We spent five hours in the Clark County Jail as our arrests were processed and then were released. Charges of “failure to disperse” were eventually dropped by the Clark County court.

Yet, someone submitted my name and Social Security number to SSA as a person who has been in jail since September 2016. SSA informed me that because of my “criminal conviction and confinement in a correctional institution for more than 30 days, we cannot pay your monthly Social Security payment.”

When I went to my local SSA office in Honolulu to explain the situation, the office staff said their supervisor must call Las Vegas and get documents showing that I had not been convicted of a crime, was not in jail and had not been in jail for 30 days or more. Such bureaucratic investigations often take many months if not years. In the meantime, the checks have been suspended. If I didn't know better, I might think this is part of the Israeli “lawfare” program, in which Israel attempts to derail protest against its policies by filing bogus lawsuits that end up having to be answered in court, tying up human and financial resources. I came back in October after having been kidnapped on the Women's Boat to Gaza, taken against my will to Israel, charged with entering Israel illegally and deported ... again. This is the second time I have been deported from Israel for challenging the illegal Israeli naval blockade of Gaza. My deportations from Israel now total 20 years, which preclude me from visiting Israel or the West Bank.

Stay tuned for the next chapter in this saga of our government appearing to attempt to silence dissent! Of course, their attempts to silence us will not be successful.

See you soon—on the streets, in the ditches and probably even in jail!

Ann Wright served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a Colonel. She also served 16 years as a U.S. diplomat in U.S. Embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan, and Mongolia. She resigned from the U.S. government in March 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq.

Birth Defect, Naval Hospital San Diego, 1969

By: Bob Davis

She wore her heart on the outside
it was the size of her tiny fist.
I don't know if she was in pain,
she lived a few hours.
Her eyes were closed, little movement,
just the chest rising and falling
of each breath, the rhythmic beating
of her heart that she wore on the outside.

Her mother came into the unit
in a wheelchair pushed by a Corpsman,
her dad followed. He was a Marine,
had fought in the mud and blood
of Agent Orange soaked jungles.

When her parents came into the
neonate intensive care unit
to say goodbye to their daughter
we covered her torso with a sheet,
her face and legs exposed in the isolette.
The parents were not permitted
to reach inside the isolette,
not allowed to touch their daughter,
they might remove the sheet
that covered her heart
she wore on the outside.

After her parents left I removed the sheet
and I touched the back of her hand,
gently brushed her knuckles,
an invitation to grasp my finger.
Her fist remained clenched,
like the heart she wore on the outside.

She died at 0300, we washed her tiny body,
wrapped her in two small blankets,
one pink and one white, folded carefully
as a military funeral flag.
I carried her close to my chest,
next to my heart, a slow march
to the morgue with the girl
who wore her heart on the outside.

Bob DavisDeadline



Deadline Looms for Dakota Access Pipeline Protest Camp

By Blake Nicholson

CANNON BALL, N.D. — As dawn breaks over an encampment that was once home to thousands of people protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline, a few hundred holdouts rise for another day of resistance.

They aren't deterred by the threat of flooding, nor by declarations from state and federal authorities that they must leave by Wednesday or face possible arrest. They're determined to remain and fight a pipeline they maintain threatens the very sanctity of the land.

"If we don't stand now, when will we?" said Tiffanie Pieper, of San Diego, who has been in the camp most of the winter.

Protesters have been at the campsite since August to fight the \$3.8 billion pipeline that will carry oil from North Dakota through South Dakota and Iowa to a shipping point in Illinois. Dallas-based Energy Transfer Partners began work on the last big section of the pipeline this month after the Army gave it permission to lay pipe under a reservoir on the Missouri River. The protest camp is on Army Corp of Engineers land nearby.

The protests have been led by Native American tribes, particularly the Standing Rock Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux, whose reservation is downstream. They say the pipeline threatens drinking water and cultural sites. ETP disputes that.

Faced with the prospect of spring flooding, some protesters are considering moving to higher ground, though not necessarily off the federal land. Some may move to the Standing Rock Reservation, where the Cheyenne River Sioux is leasing land to provide camping space even though Standing Rock Sioux Chairman Dave Archambault has urged protesters to leave.

"We have the same goals," Cheyenne River Chairman Harold Frazier said of himself and Archambault. "We

don't agree on whether or not the water protectors should be on the ground."

Those urging the protesters to leave say they're concerned about possible flooding in the area as snow melts.

"The purpose of this is to close the land to ensure no one gets harmed," said Corps Capt. Ryan Hignight.

One concern is that floodwaters could wash tons of trash and debris at the encampment into the nearby rivers.

"One of the biggest environmental threats to the Missouri is the camp itself," said North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum.

Many in camp think authorities are exaggerating the flood threat and trying to turn public sentiment against them.

"They're talking like it will be a flood that will wipe out all of existence," said Luke Black Elk, a Cheyenne River Sioux from South Dakota. Some flooding is likely, he said, but "most of it won't be that bad."

The camp has been the site of numerous and sometimes violent clashes between police and protesters who call themselves "water protectors," with more than 700 arrests. The camp's population has dwindled as the pipeline battle has largely moved into the courts.

Protesters who remain say they're prepared to be arrested, but will remain peaceful.

"We'll make it difficult for them to handcuff us, but there will be no forceful opposition," said Bryce Peppard, from Oregon.

The Corps and the governor say they would rather there were no arrests.



The Civil War and 150 Years of Forgotten US Military Atrocities

By James Bovard

George Orwell wrote in 1945 that “the nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.” The same moral myopia has carried over to most Americans’ understanding of the Civil War. While popular historians have recently canonized the war as a practically holy crusade to free the slaves, in reality civilians were intentionally targeted and brutalized in the final year of the war.

The most dramatic forgotten atrocity in the Civil War occurred 150 years ago when Union Gen. Philip Sheridan unleashed a hundred mile swath of flames in the Shenandoah Valley that left vast numbers of women and childrens tottering towards starvation. Unfortunately, the burning of the Shenandoah Valley has been largely forgotten, foreshadowing how subsequent brutal military operations would also vanish into the Memory Hole.

In August 1864, supreme Union commander Ulysses S. Grant ordered Sheridan to “do all the damage to railroads and crops you can... If the war is to last another year, we want the Shenandoah Valley to remain a barren waste.” Sheridan set to the task with vehemence, declaring that “the people must be left nothing but their eyes to weep with over the war” and promised that, when he was finished, the valley “from Winchester to Staunton will have but little in it for man or beast.”

Because people lived in a state that had seceded from the Union, Sheridan acted as if they had automatically forfeited their property, if not their lives. Some Union soldiers were aghast at their marching orders. A Pennsylvania cavalryman lamented at the end of the fiery spree: “We burnt some sixty houses and all most of the barns, hay, grain and corn in the shocks for fifty miles [south of] Strasburg... It was a hard-looking sight

to see the women and children turned out of doors at this season of the year.” An Ohio major wrote in his diary that the burning “does not seem real soldierly work. We ought to enlist a force of scoundrels for such work.” A newspaper correspondent embedded with Sheridan’s army reported: “Hundreds of nearly starving people are going North . . . not half the inhabitants of the valley can subsist on it in its present condition.”

After one of Sheridan’s favorite aides was shot by Confederate soldiers, Sheridan ordered his troops to burn all houses within a five mile radius. After many outlying houses had been torched, the small town at the center – Dayton – was spared after a federal officer disobeyed Sheridan’s order. The homes and barns of Mennonites – a peaceful sect who opposed slavery and secession – were especially hard hit by that crackdown, according to a 1909 history of Mennonites in America.

By the end of Sheridan’s campaign, the former “breadbasket of the Confederacy” could no longer even feed the women and children remaining there. An English traveler in 1865 “found the Valley standing empty as a moor.” Historian Walter Fleming, in his classic 1919 study, *The Sequel to Appomattox*, quoted one bedeviled local farmer: “From Harper’s Ferry to New Market, which is about eighty miles, the country was almost a desert... The barns were all burned; chimneys standing without houses, and houses standing without roof, or door, or window.” John Heatwole, author of “The Burning: Sheridan’s Devastation of the Shenandoah Valley” (1998), concluded: “The civilian population of the Valley was affected to a greater extent than was the populace of any other region during the war, including those in the path of Sherman’s infamous march to the sea in Georgia.” Unfortunately, given the chaos of the era at the end of the Civil War and its immediate aftermath, there are no reliable statistics on the number of women, children, and other civilians who perished thanks to “the burning.”

Some defenders of the Union military tactics insist that there was no intent to harshly punish civilians. But, after three years of a bloody stalemate, the Lincoln administration had adapted a total war mindset to scourge the South into submission. As Sheridan

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was finishing his fiery campaign, Gen. William Sherman wrote to Gen. Grant that “[U]ntil we can repopulate Georgia, it is useless to occupy it, but the utter destruction of it’s roads, houses, and people will cripple their military resources.” Sherman had previously telegraphed Washington that “[T]here is a class of people – men, women, and children, who must be killed or banished before you can hope for peace and order.” President Lincoln congratulated both Sheridan and Sherman for campaigns that sowed devastation far and wide.

The carnage inflicted by Sheridan, Sherman, and other northern commanders made the South’s post-war recovery far slower and multiplied the misery of both white and black survivors. Connecticut College professor Jim Downs’ recent book, *Sick From Freedom*, exposes how the chaotic situation during and after the war contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of freed slaves.

After the Civil War, politicians and many historians consecrated the conflict and its grisly tactics were consigned to oblivion. The habit of sweeping abusive policies under the rug also permeated post-Civil War policy towards the Indians (Sheridan famously declared “the only good Indian is a dead Indian”) and the suppression of Filipino insurgents after the Spanish-American War. Later historians sometimes ignored U.S. military tactics in World War Two and Vietnam that resulted in heavy civilian casualties.

The failure to recognize how wars routinely spawn pervasive brutality and collateral deaths lowers Americans’ resistance to new conflicts that promise to make the world safe for democracy, or rid the world of evil, or achieve other lofty sounding goals. For instance, the Obama administration sold its bombing of Libya as a self-evident triumph of good over a vile despot; instead, chaos reigns in Tripoli. As the administration ramps up bombing in Syria and Iraq, both its rhetoric and its tactics echo prior U.S. misfires. The proclaimed intentions of U.S. bombing campaigns are far more important than their accuracy.

Since 1864, no prudent American should have expected this nation’s wars to have happy or uplifting endings. Unfortunately, as long as the spotlight is kept off atrocities, most citizens will continue to

underestimate the odds that wars will spawn debacles and injustices that return to haunt us.

James Bovard is the author of author of *Public Policy Hooligan*, *Attention Deficit Democracy*, *The Bush Betrayal*, *Terrorism and Tyranny*, and other books. More info at www.jimbovard.com; on Twitter @jimbovard.

“Peace comes from being able to contribute the best that we have, and all that we are, toward creating a world that supports everyone. But it is also securing the space for others to contribute the best that they have and all that they are.” ~ Hafsat Abiola





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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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