

Newsletter

Alaska Peace Center



Issue 4

Spring/Summer 2008

G.I.s ASSERTING THEIR RIGHTS: A Message from the G.I. Rights Hotline Coordinator

On May 15 a federal magistrate in Anchorage recommended the federal district court order the Army to honorably discharge PFC Michael Barnes because the Army improperly denied his application for conscientious objection (CO). As of the writing of this article, the Barnes family is waiting for the district judge to affirm the decision.

The attorney for Barnes says it would be unusual for the judge to disagree with the magistrate especially since his recommendation is so strongly worded. Only about one half of all CO claims are approved by the Army and a very small fraction of those denied ever go to court. Historically, the federal courts have been very reluctant to overrule the military.

The donors who support the Alaska Peace Center support its G.I. Rights Hotline program and are directly responsible for this victory. Michael Barnes is just one of over a hundred cases where the life of a distressed service member has been positively impacted by the availability of counselors located in Alaska.

The military does not inform its service members that there is a regulation providing for the honorable discharge of anyone who has a change in their moral, ethical or religious beliefs that cause them to be unable to participate in any war in any form after joining the military.

Michael's wife contacted an Alaska G.I. Rights Hotline counselor in late 2006 while Michael was deployed in Iraq with the Ft. Richardson airborne brigade. If we had not been there to inform Michael of his rights under the regulation and guide him through the process, he would have been forced to either participate in combat operations or refuse orders and face several months in a military prison.

You, the supporters of the Alaska Peace Center, have made a huge impact on the lives of individual service men and women and also possibly on many to come through this important federal court action.

Alison Carter

50 cents
\$1.00

Anchorage Daily News

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

BREAKING NEWS AT ADN.COM

Alaska's Newspaper

Soldier battles on to be conscientious objector

Conscientious objection

A sincere opposition, because of religious or deeply held moral or ethical belief, to participating in war in any form, or to participating as a combatant.

If the objection is to war, the applicant can be released from military service. If the objection is to being a combatant, the applicant can be assigned noncombat duties.

FORT RICH: Paratrooper says Christian faith precludes war; government doubts his sincerity.
By GEORGE BRYSON
gbryson@adn.com

A Fort Richardson-based paratrooper who had his request for conscientious objector status denied by the U.S. Army while serving in Iraq last year appealed that decision in an Anchorage federal court on Monday.

The motion by Pfc. Michael Barnes, who served as a radio operator in the 4th Airborne Brigade Combat Team, marked the first such case in Alaska since the war in Iraq began.

A decision on whether to allow the appeal to proceed to a civilian hearing in U.S. District Court is expected to be issued this week by federal Magistrate John D. Roberts.

Barnes, 26, didn't testify during the hourlong hearing while sitting alongside Anchorage attorney Sam Fortier. But in paperwork filed with the court, he declared that his Christian faith — which crystallized and evolved as he watched events in Iraq unfold — now prohibits him from waging war.

"Spending my time on this earth killing or supporting killing others is unacceptable to me," Barnes wrote. "Serving Jesus is doing the opposite of participating in war. It is loving your enemy, avoiding conflict, being humble and living peacefully. I am unable

Pfc. Michael Barnes wants out of the Army.

See Back Page, **OBJECTOR**

ABOUT FACE

Paul Miller

Thomas Sowell's "Conflict of Visions" is his seminal work. The basic premise of the book is that the foundation of a person's philosophical and ideological viewpoint leads him or her to fall on one side of the aisle regarding numerous issues. So if you fall on the right or left politically on certain issues, you'll probably line up with many others on that one side. What Mr. Sowell does not go into, however, is what happens when one's experience leads to a radical shift in one's political perspective. This is my case. I was once a hard core neoconservative steeped in the philosophy and rhetoric of the discourse. I was not a partisan blinded by ideological pursuit. For me it was a well thought system that I developed while living overseas for five years. I engaged in debate, sometimes friendly, sometimes not, with people all over the world about America's global role. From philosophers such as Leo Strauss and Allen Bloom to the recent crop of intellectuals encompassing the umbrella of neoconservative thought, such as Richard Perle, David Frum, Max Boot and Victor Davis Hansen, to name a few, I devoured their writings daily and anticipated their books for their new revelations. It was as if I was participating in the creation of a new and exciting paradigm of American foreign policy. The philosophical depth was staggering, the theories borrowing, cannibalizing and fusing every school imaginable, Wilsonism, Realism, Progressivism, Bismarkism, whatever you want to call them. "Neoconservative" covered them all, hovering over the multistrata of complex and varied theses. All that was needed by a practitioner of this new mantra was to peel away layer upon layer of intellectual discourse to defeat an opponent in debate. For decades this new foreign policy school lay in wait finally developing a groundswell and bursting out after the 9/11 attacks. Unfortunately, the application of neoconservative foreign policy has over the past six years proven one absolutely undeniable fact: it was all crap, and I was dead wrong.

Richard Perle stated recently in a *Vanity Fair* article "We went in with the best of intentions". Great. I don't suppose that if Dick (or his son) had actually been in the armed services his admission of defeat would have been so subtle. Unfortunately, I

have to stare their mistakes in the face every day. But the experience has given me a new perspective on a whole host of ideas, has made me reconstitute my vision and see on which side of the aisle I fall. It is not as if the whole philosophical justification for the war had been a house of cards that had collapsed onto a bloody table. It is that the house of cards got up and left the room without looking back. There is no basis whatsoever, neither ideological, political philosophical or otherwise underlying neocon discourse. And this leads me to an observation on American society as a whole: the segregation between the thinkers and doers is pretty extreme in this country. Should we really be taking advice on what our military can and can not do from a man who can't change his own oil? The philosophy versus application part was missing.

The nation's supreme confidence in our armed forces has meant that we've overlooked the deficiencies at the top. Now, this is not the old and tired chicken hawk argument, but the simple fact that the segment of people pushing for war have never been in a war, let alone served in the armed forces; and this is significant. What matters here is seeing the armed forces for what they are, not what we think they are. "The Tom Clancy Army" is what I call a misread, Hollywood unreality of what armed forces are. If you at least served in the military you are aware that the officers do not act, look or think like a fictional Tom Clancy character (Tom Clancy never served either). After serving for over three years in the army, outsiders' perceptions of what our army is amaze me. I thought the same before I joined: think the movie *Stripes*, rather than *Blackhawk Down*. It would be funny, except for all the worthless death. This misconception of our armed forces has serious drawbacks. The idea that the force is made of good, smart, clean cut men serving in the best interest of their country, a force based on merit and accomplishment is wide of the mark. That our armed forces wouldn't have all the drawbacks of other government agencies, CIA, FBI and all the other intelligence agencies that allowed 3000 people to perish because they wouldn't share information because of turf wars and misplaced pride underlies a disconnect with the public. Careerism is a disease that is endemic within our military. To serve is to come in for a year or two maybe four, after that initial enlistment you have made a decision. This is now your

livelihood, and so you are serving your career, your family, your status, your personal ambition. This is natural and it collides with a sense of altruistic service that people associate with the WWII army... To see these generals testifying before Congress is a joke. It is like seeing an athlete before the board members of his sponsor, and they are asking why he hasn't won a match in years. His job is going to be to keep their support and sponsorship by saying all is well and that last match was really a tie. You cannot think that these men don't have anything at stake here. That their personal and professional interest is not at stake and yet somehow we are to receive a truthful and valid explanation for the dismal record. The US army has not won a conflict in almost 70 years. Finding a justification for the trillions of dollars and the hundreds of thousands of lives lost because of our perpetual state of constant warfare since the end of the Second World War is hard to do. Even taking into consideration the Cold War and the "Grand Chessboard" or post-cold war hegemonic power considerations, you are still hard pressed to see how this nearly constant warfare has truly benefited our interests, either in the long or short term. Which brings us back to the nearly sanctified status of our armed forces as well as our lionized generals. Vietnam guilt complex plays a large part no doubt, an unwillingness to speak out, let alone question our generals. This has of course eroded civilian control of our military and has deferred everything to their court. Now with their very vested interests where do you think this is going to get us? Do you think a general is going to sit in front of the Armed Services committee and say "We need to withdraw now!" "This is a lost cause; chalk this up to another one in the minus column." Probably not going to happen. This leads us to the state of the army at the present moment and to a vision of where this gross conflict of interest has gotten us.... an army that is broke.

I am part of a brigade that has been Stop-Lossed. What this means is that we are being held against our will to serve beyond what we had initially signed up for. Six years into an apparently never ending conflict. The fact that they are still using this "tool," to use their vernacular, shows that something is amiss. The other services have stopped using this tool because they only used it for its original intention; during the original invasion hold the phone so to speak to see what is going to happen, all the nightmare scenarios of a destabilized region and an all encompassing Middle East war did not materialize so no need for it to continue. Continued justification by the army to use this very broad and abstract almost

buried clause should give you an idea of the very scary and real nature of the conflict that we are in, and of our military's ability to handle it over the long term. Take whatever ideas you have about what is wrong with the way the war in Iraq is going and multiply it by 1000. I sometimes would sit with an Iraq army soldier on guard for hours on end, gun shots all around us, four or five different conflicts involving various parties occurring in every cardinal direction. His response? "Do you have an extra pair of boots? Mine are worn." He did indeed need boots; his soles were almost completely worn off. He would bribe me with chai tea cigarettes and conversations to reach some kind of deal where I would give him an extra pair of boots. Never mind what was happening all around him, the fact that this man could care less about what was going on less than a mile from him can not be exaggerated. He didn't care nor did any of his fellow soldiers or the various Mafioso police like organizations we were stationed with, and all of these groups were plotting against each other. Numbers from a spread sheet aren't going to give you that information.

What I hope to get across here is that many who had enlisted during a time of war did so with idealistic intentions. We really did feel that America is a force for good in the world and that it was necessary to use that force to promote change. Seeing the intellectual godfathers of this conflict either abandon us or sit there in denial is disheartening. Compound that with a country and military that has scant memory of how we got there, treat the current situation with ever shifting rationales with *strategies du jour* and you have your volunteerism turn into conscription. What I hope comes out of all this is a few positives. One is a healthy skepticism of our military and its motives. Hopefully the Vietnam guilt complex will wear off and the freedom to ask a four star general "Do you have any idea what you are doing?" will return. Two, a whole new generation turned sour on the prospect of force as a viable option for "diplomacy by other means". And three, veterans who unlike their grandfathers in WWII but very much like the fathers who served in Vietnam are very wary of the military. Veterans are people who join things, they are politically active, being less than one percent of the population, are sought after and carry some may say disproportionate weight politically. And hopefully in the near future these veterans will swing the pendulum back to less adventurous and a more nuanced approach to the world's problems. ♦

♦ REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES ♦

BRAINSTORMING FOR PEACE

Anne Mallard, Carole Klopff, Claire Alix and Alison Carter

On April 5th 2008, about 15 people gathered at the Alaska Peace Center for a brainstorming session. We've been functioning in the community for three years now and questions had arisen: where did we want to focus our energy in the coming years? Was it necessary to reassess our original mission statement and vision? Was there a consensus among us to focus on finding a permanent home for the Alaska Peace Center (APC) in Fairbanks? What activities should we prioritize? Who in the community were we reaching and should we try to reach other groups? How could we increase our active membership or renew our board?



Facilitator Jack Heacock at the Peace Center, April 5, 2008

Jack Heacock, a practiced facilitator and brother of board member Dick Heacock, came all the way from Virginia to lead us in a brainstorming session designed to bring out all the ideas in our group. Once expressed, it was hoped we would prioritize the ideas and discuss the most important ones in detail.

It was certainly an enthusiastic group, with wide ranging interests. Of course the APC is really an umbrella for several diverse groups interested in Peace and Human Rights, and there were representatives there from Fairbanks Coalition for Peace and Justice, GI Rights Hotline, Alaska Impact, No Nukes North, Veterans for Peace, and Grandmothers for Peace, as well as people from the community. The brainstorming produced nearly 50

different projects that the APC could be involved in – in fact our facilitator said he had never seen such a lively group with so many ideas. Some of these were new directions, such as reaching out to children of different ages and to different ethnic groups, or working for peace through art or music. Many reinforced our current concerns such as resistance to war and non violence, and our needs to increase membership, keep open hours at the APC and find a permanent home for our organization: all the ideas are listed in the chart on the next page.

As a group we tried to rate all these ideas, but it was felt by many that this was not a useful exercise. In the end we focused on two suggestions. There had been overwhelming agreement that **Military Outreach** should be one of our primary foci – engaging the service men and women on base in Fairbanks. This we do currently through **The GI Rights Hotline** – a telephone hotline which was started by Alison Carter a couple of years ago. After two Training Sessions, there are now six counselors who take calls from soldiers, especially those in Alaska, who are having problems and need unbiased help in understanding their rights and options. The Hotline has been a really effective program, and the only thing it needs is a part time staff person, preferably paid to help Alison run the program. Veterans for Peace North Star Chapter has also been actively organizing events and actions to engage soldiers on base to let them know that there is support for resistance within the military.

The second idea we discussed in depth was the search for **A Permanent Home**. This issue has been discussed at length by the APC Board. Those present considered it to be important in part because our nation seems to be continually at war. Perpetual war and increasing militarization raise the question of how Peace can have permanent visibility in the Fairbanks community. What would a permanent home mean? A better place to house the library, hold meetings, and provide access to internet would attract more people and give us additional incentive to expand open hours. Better facilities, including a kitchen, would make it a more inviting place to “hang

out” and thus would bring in people interested in participating in some of the projects we had envisioned. We were reminded that not only is our rent at risk of going up, but our current rented space is in a patchwork edifice with an uncertain future. The main obstacle to all this was the cost of buying a suitable building, and board members described one currently under consideration. Jack Heacock gave us a real pep talk on how we could achieve this purchase, and complimented everyone present on their vitality and enthusiasm. Many on the Board came away with the feeling that this was now a priority project. At the Board Meeting which followed (on April 15th) a committee was set up to begin the practical work of writing a grant proposal and deciding on how to connect with possible local donors. We broke up for a potluck at 6:00 pm and you can imagine that there was much more lively discussion. In fact, if you are interested in one of the projects or topics listed below, consider coming to one of our Meetings (1st and 3rd Tuesdays of every

month, at 7 pm at the Peace Center) and help us realize the vision that speaks to you.



Some participants during brainstorming session at the APC

Priorities Suggested at Brainstorming Session

(not ranked in any particular order)

MILITARY

- Counter recruitment, including registry of alternatives to military service - concrete jobs
- G.I. Rights hotline

RESISTANCE

- Conscientious objection e.g. IRS resistance non-violence

ART & CULTURE

- Peace through art - more visual art
- Peace through music - free peace music for kids
- Peace through food
- Peace theory

ECOLOGY/SUSTAINABILITY

- Modeling sustainability in our lives
- Advocating non GMO

GOVERNMENT & LAW, EDUCATION

- Education for impeachment and criminal prosecution
- Human rights - torture
- International law
- Preservation of cultural heritage
- Undoing the power of the military industrial complex
- Establishing a department of peace
- Race and healing
- Local government awareness of peace
- Counter-advertising campaign

INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL

- Peace at home
- Peace for individuals
- Meditation
- Self-care

TRAINING

- Training for active citizenship
- Non-violence training, in schools
- Training for community organizing

ORGANIZATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

- Increased communication with peace groups and coalition building
- Outreach to church groups
- Increasing membership
- Permanent home for APC
- An internship program
- Open hours for the APC

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Connect with soldiers/families
- Young adults
- College students
- High school students
- Children

Overarching goal: reach diverse ethnic groups

No to Torture, Yes to Peace!

Marjorie Cole

"Faced with an insoluble problem, you go cut your nails, because you can do that. You can actually achieve something there."
Anglican Bishop N.T. Wright

Louie Vitale is a slight, 75-year-old Franciscan priest with a habit of getting arrested. This winter he spent five months in prison for praying in a driveway at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, a place where U.S. army officers learn to torture.



Father Vitale being arrested in Washington D.C. (Photo by Ted Stein, www.calpeacepower.org/0301/declaration.html)

Franciscans look for opportunities to be cheerful. Blessed are the poor in spirit, they believe, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Franciscans live healthy and smile a lot. So why does this man keep sending himself into the Lion's Den? Why doesn't he just feed the birds, praise the Lord and trim his nails?

Why go up against a leviathan?

A friend in Fairbanks likes the bit of advice he found on the chalkboard of a deli in Rhode Island: "When facing a difficult task act as though it is impossible to fail. If you're going after Moby Dick, take along the tartar sauce." In Call to Action Alaska, a local group, we are concerned with justice within and without the Catholic Church. Going up against an institution like that may seem like chasing Moby Dick (in this case, the elusive white whale of open and frank dialogue in the Catholic church). The spirit drains away and we're always forgetting the

tartar sauce. How does Father Louie manage to keep going, at age 75, up against the U.S. Army?

When Pace e Bene (a nonviolence service co-founded by Father Louie) announced that, fresh out of jail, he was beginning a speaking tour in the spring of 2008, I asked a few people if they thought we could bring him to Alaska. The honorarium would be \$1,000, more than any one group could afford.

I contacted Call to Action and emailed the Alaska Peace Center and former participants in the "Engage" course in nonviolent living. I even contacted the Catholic Diocese. They won't talk about women's ordination, but when it comes to opposing torture, their immediate response was to indicate that we were on common ground.

In the course of a few days, I had received offers of help, in the form of housing, venues, sweat, money, and moral support (don't let anyone ever tell you moral support isn't invaluable; it can make all the difference!) from an array of nonprofit humanitarian and religious groups: The Alaska Peace Center, Call to Action members in Anchorage and Fairbanks, Amnesty International in Anchorage and Fairbanks, North Star Veterans for Peace, Grandmothers for Peace, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Fairbanks, The Chena Ridge Friends, the Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks, St. Raphael Parish in Fairbanks—and we had not even begun to submit formal proposals!

"Don't worry about the money," two people told me. "It'll happen."

Unfortunately it turns out that Father Louie himself is not able to come to Alaska this spring or summer. We attempted several dates, but things intervened to keep him from being able to make plans for the long trip from his home in Oakland (court dates, visits to physical therapy for a broken shoulder). But making contact with so many hardworking peace-centered people in Alaska was like discovering a patchwork quilt of willing hearts, peaceful organizations, and a widespread opposition to torture.

Local veteran Rob Mulford, who climbed a fence outside the White House with Father Louie two summers ago, offered support. I called him on the 5th anniversary of the infamous "Mission Accomplished" banner and reached him just as he got home from demonstrating at the Fort Wainwright gates. He'd been there for two hours, holding signs to let soldiers driving in and out of the gates know that people care, people are working to end this thing, and there are

such things as G.I. Rights. In two hours, he received three vulgar gestures and over 40 thumbs-up, supportive responses from Wainwright-bound traffic.

I don't know where people like Louie Vitale and Rob find the courage to keep meeting this situation head on and face to face. As a witness on the sidelines, I know that to keep putting yourself out there is darned hard and mighty draining. The Alaska Peace Center is to be commended for drawing together people from many points of view, helping us stay in contact with one another, supporting ALL our troops including the troops of peacemakers among us, and backing up those who speak frankly and find the spirit to step forward, out of the crowd.

* * *

Interfaith Mini-Conference on U.S.-sponsored Torture

David Bantz

In March, I attended a "mini-conference" on US-Sponsored Torture organized by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture <<http://www.nrcat.org>>. NRCAT is a coalition of over 130 religious groups (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh) to publicize abuses and promote action to end US-sponsored torture. The conference was co-sponsored by Rabbis for Human Rights-North America, Washington Region Religious Campaign Against Torture, American University Office of the University Chaplain, and Pax Christi, USA.

When I arrived at the conference location at a church on Capitol Hill (a few yards from the Library of Congress and the Supreme Court), I thought I must have made a mistake. There were no signs for the conference. The doors were locked tight. There was no one to be seen. After a few minutes I found the conference organizers in a bare basement room accessed via a small side entrance. When I noted that there were no visible signs for the event, I was handed felt-tipped markers and a piece of cardboard to make one.

Conference organizers tell me the modest scale of the conference reflects the fact that many of our allies in the peace movement are deeply discouraged and passive in the face of persistent lawless and immoral violence perpetrated in our name.

The main speaker of the event was Ray McGovern - a CIA analyst for 27 years and co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for

Sanity. While all speakers emphasized the fundamental immorality of torture, McGovern also summarized why torture has been consistently rejected by thoughtful military and intelligence professionals. (see "Torture with Decency and Compassion: Waterboarding for God and Country" at <http://www.counterpunch.org/mcgovern02112008.html>). Memorably, McGovern reported that when US torture survivors were asked how they had resisted torture, many responded that they had repeatedly told themselves "at least we (US forces) don't do this."

Why, if torture is not only immoral and illegal, but ineffective - producing false information, destroying our reputation and potentially devastating our own prisoners deprived of that sense of higher morality - why would the current administration not merely condone but orchestrate torture? An answer, according to McGovern, is precisely the false "confessions" and "intelligence" produced. Tortured prisoners confess to terrorist plots, secret weapons programs, and conspiracies. While we know these are likely torture-induced fabrications, they can be used to manipulate public opinion to "justify" bombing, assassination, war, and occupation of other nations, and domestic police state actions to "protect" us.

When asked about the presidential candidates' stance on torture, Ray McGovern said that you could give some credit to McCain for introducing in 2005 the amendment to end torture of detainees... however, since then he has reversed his position and has supported the President's veto in mid February of the bill that would have established one interrogation standard (in which torture and water boarding is banned) across the government's agencies. Candidate Clinton has been equivocal on torture. Obama, according to McGovern, is the only candidate to clearly state that torture is always wrong.

How can you help end US-sponsored torture? Individuals can sign the "Statement of Conscience" at <http://www.nrcat.org/>. Write letter to newspapers and write your legislators; suggestions for an effective letter are on the NCRAT web site. Congregations can order banners for display such as that in the picture (contact bonnie@opposetorture.org or 512-299-0163 to order banners).

* * *

Department of Peace Conference

Don Ross

I had the privilege of attending the Northwest Regional Conference of The Peace Alliance in Vancouver, Washington April 11-13. The conference was organized by David Hazen and a host of helpers as part of the Alliance's campaign for a U. S. Department of Peace.

I did not know heretofore, that legislation for this purpose had been introduced in Congress roughly 100 times. This is not something that began with Kucinich's proposal. There is a feeling that it is better to be not too closely allied with any one legislator given the long history of trying to establish a Department of Peace. Interestingly Ted Stevens has said he would support this legislation. There are 68 sponsors in the House.

The Peace Alliance and Campaign for a Department of Peace will have a presence at the Democratic National Convention in Denver.

Part of the strategy to build support for establishing a Department of Peace is to point to its future role in such areas as gang and prison violence prevention as well as police training programs and not solely to prevent war.

I was impressed by the quality of presentations and presenters whose dedication to personal transformation as well as in society as a whole came through to a degree I found refreshing. It was my good fortune to share a bed and hang out with Dean Van Leuven, lecturer/author of "Life Without Anger." (see www.lifewithoutanger.com). He has an interesting newsletter that follows the "Dear Abbey/Dean" format.

Some bits of wisdom and inspiration I took away from conference presenters follows:

- From George Bernard Shaw:
I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

- Need to communicate across our barriers, forgiveness of everything that has happened, is happening and will happen.
- Make your obsessions worthy of your attention, make lots of "unreasonable" requests of those from whom you seek support.
- Inspire yourself, proactively keep your inspiration high.
- Number one predictor of war - child mortality rates.
- Give up your negative assumptions (flee negativity).
- Use language that everyone can hear.
- Bring power of spirituality and higher self into your work.
- No struggle, no progress - Frederick Douglas.
- Change yourself first...that will lead to change in other people... and change in the world.
- I pledge allegiance to the Earth, one planet in our care, irreplaceable, with peace, freedom and beauty for all.
- Golden rule - seek to connect first rather than convince.
- Some movies to check out, A Force More Powerful and Iron Jawed Angels.

The "grand finale" was orchestrated by Daniel Dancer of Art for the Sky.com. Google "Raising the Dove" to view a video of the unveiling. Can you find Don Ross somewhere in the outer circle upper left?

A sad note at the very beginning was after all Lori Draper's (from Seward) hard work in conference organizing she was unable to attend due to the unexpected death of her brother. I enjoyed the company and conversation of three other younger women from Seward driving to and from Seattle.

* * *

GI Rights Hotline Conference

Robert Sullivan

Earlier in April Alison Carter, Carrie Farr, and Robert Sullivan traveled to San Diego CA for a conference of the GI Rights Hotline. This was our first gathering following the establishment of our group as a distinct entity associated with the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors. We gathered for workshops and the establishment of By-Laws, as well as for social contact and networking. The Thomas Jefferson School of Law and the San Diego Church of the Brethren were our hosts.

Many of us were meeting face-to-face for the first time, following months and years of seeing e-mail postings on our List Server. Workshops on Conscientious Objection, Medical Discharges, Counseling techniques, Sexual Harassment and Assault, as well as organizational concerns including Quality of Care and adoption of our Bylaws. Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans against the War led discussions, including a showing of "Sir, No Sir" by its director, David Zeiger. We enjoyed seeing again those Network Trainers who visited us in Alaska to get our "node" up to speed, Steve Morse, Jackie Thomason, Dawn Blanken and Steve Collier. All of us agree that the experience was very valuable and helped us renew our commitment to Peace and the rightness of our actions.



Thursday Evening, April 10, 2008 at the GLRights Hotline Conference in San Diego, CA. Seated people include Alaska Peace Center representatives Alison Carter (2nd from left), Carrie Farr (4th) and Robert Sullivan (last).

* * *

North Star Chapter 146 / Veterans for Peace Initiates Military Outreach

Rob Mulford

Winter Soldier Hearings

Veterans for Peace hosted a live showing at the Alaska Peace Center of the March 13th to March 16th "Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan" hearings held by Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) in Silver Spring, Maryland near Washington, D.C.

The hearings started on Thursday Mar. 13 with a history of the modern G.I. resistance movement and

included panel members who took part in the 1971 "Winter Soldier" hearings held by Vietnam Veterans Against the War. The discussions that followed were largely eyewitness accounts of the occupations covering the subjects: dehumanization of civilian populations; racial and gender discrimination; war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the rules of engagement that led to them; as well as the mistreatment / punishment of veterans who suffer Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Although mostly ignored by the mainstream media, these hearings were powerful and sometimes heart wrenching indictments of the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. In my opinion they mark the most significant development in the effort to bring sanity to foreign policy since the "War On Terror" commenced. We, in the peace and justice community, should lend our support however we can to the courageous members of IVAW and any other members of the military who decide to resist. Please take the time to visit www.ivaw.org. Check out the testimony and contribute however you can.

Ft. Wainwright Outreach/Engagement

On May 1, 2008 (the 5th anniversary of President Bush's "Mission Accomplished" statement) members of North Star Chapter 146 of Veterans for Peace took up position before the Main Gate at Fort Wainwright, Alaska establishing a VFP/Military Member outreach outpost. The position was chosen for its visibility to military members going to and leaving work. This was a good choice for visibility but proved inadequate for personal interaction and/or literature distribution due to construction activity on the roadway.

I took first watch (07:15 to 09:00) carrying a sign stating on one side "SOLDIERS - VETERANS FOR PEACE (VFP LOGO) SUPPORT YOU" and "END STOP LOSS (VFP logo) 457-5578 (my phone number)" on the other. The observed reactions of the troops entering and leaving post appeared overwhelmingly positive with the "END STOP LOSS" sign being clearly the most popular. Clenched fist salutes, thumbs up gestures, peace signs, friendly waves, and tooted horns vastly outnumbered any show of disapproval by a ratio of at least 20 to 1. Only one giving of the bird was observed. I was just about to count it as a negative reaction when the young soldier with arm extended far outside the window bearing the infamous salute vociferously proclaimed "[*Expletive Deleted*] Stop Loss". I registered that as a sign of approval. A few

minutes later a soldier shouting "You are awesome" reinforced my belief that we are on the right track with this outreach.

Second watch (10:00 to 1:00) was taken by James Kerrigan (U.S. Army Veteran) and me. The reaction of troops leaving for lunch was pretty much the same as the morning shift. James was carrying a sign proclaiming "WE SUPPORT YOU (VFP logo)" on one side and "FULL BENEFITS FOR RETURNING VETERANS" on the other.

On the last watch (15:45 to 18:00) Jeanne Olson (U.S. Air Force Vietnam era Veteran) and her team of activists took up position across the Richardson highway from where we had been stationed. They hung huge banners proclaiming "Mission Accomplished" and "major combat operations in Iraq have ended - President G. W. Bush 05/01/03". They also carried U.S. flags and had a grill going to offer passers-by a hot dog.

All in all the day went well and I have gotten some phone calls that I am following up on.

We will continue this outreach and engagement project by meeting, talking with and listening to servicepersons; offering them literature and DVDs (e.g. the movies "The Ground Truth" and "Sir! No Sir!"); and by taking an active stand for their rights by advocating for full benefits and opposing "Stop Loss".

If you are interested in taking part in this outreach or you know an active duty service person and/or an Iraq or Afghanistan veteran who would like to talk with us or receive videos or literature please get in touch with me. My contact info is: Rob Mulford, Veterans for Peace - P.O. Box 83646 - Fairbanks, AK 99708; phone 907-457-5578; and email at mulford.rob@gmail.com.

Wage Peace...

◆ ANNOUNCEMENTS ◆

Congratulations Solveig!

Solveig Pedersen was APC's first summer intern when the center was starting in 2005. This semester Solveig brilliantly defended her MA dissertation in communication entitled "*Walking Peacefully in the World: A Narrative Understanding of Nonviolence*" (see her abstract below).

Solveig is now moving to Anchorage to begin working with the YWCA as Director of Women's Health and Youth Development Programs. So long Solveig and good luck with your new job!

Abstract

My thesis is a narrative study of university seniors' understandings of the concept of nonviolence. As it is human science research, I used the epistemology of constructionism, the theoretical perspective of the Social Construction of Reality, the methodology of narrative inquiry, conversational interviewing as my methods, and thematic analysis to analyze the data. Nine co-researchers were

interviewed about their perceptions of nonviolence and their lived experiences with nonviolence. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and described.

During analysis, four themes and eight co-themes emerged, which provide particular knowledge about perceptions of nonviolence. The emergent themes, named in the natural language of my co-researchers are: "It is violence, but it's not necessarily violent;" "I'll do nonviolence to a point;" "What would Mother Teresa do?" and "Yeah, Mom was right."

Additionally, it is clear there is a lack of significant cultural meaning for the word nonviolence among the co-researchers. Throughout the interviews, co-researchers began making connections between nonviolence and everyday lived experience. During our conversations, we participated in co-constructing a more nonviolent reality. The research indicates that communicating about nonviolence may be a first step in creating a more peaceful world.

◆ PAST EVENTS ◆

held at APC and/or coordinated by groups associated with APC

Winter 2007/08 and Spring 2008

October 2007

- 10/6 - 10/27: Call for Peace - APC Phone Marathon to end the war in Iraq
- 10/27 - Big Rally at Bicentennial Park to end the war in Iraq (UAFCPJ, VFP, Grandmothers FP, APC)

November 2007

- 11/14 - 11/16: Training in Fairbanks and Anchorage: Military Law Task Force Training for civilian attorney and legal workers (sponsored by GI Rights Hotline)
- 11/16: APC Monthly potluck: public talk by lawyers Luke and Marti Hiken from the Military Law Task Force in San Francisco

December 2007

- 12/07: Peace Choir Concert at Unitarian Universalist Church, proceeds to APC
- 12/13: Showing of the *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* documentary (by Rory Kennedy) co-sponsored with the UAF Amnesty International Club as part of Amnesty International "86 Days" campaign
- 12/21: APC Solstice Potluck, showing of segments of *A Force more powerful*

January 2008

- 01/11: Candlelight vigil on Cushman Bridge. International Day of Action to Close Guantánamo
- 01/18: APC Monthly potluck, *Images from Nepal: Trekking the Annapurna and Naar-Phu Trails*, slide show presentation by Claire Alix

March 2008

- 03/07: David Bantz at Interfaith Mini-Conference on U.S.-sponsored Torture in Washington, DC
- 03/09: Dahr Jamail in Fairbanks. Potluck at APC, talk and book signing at Schaible Auditorium, UAF (co-sponsor UAFCPJ)



Potluck at APC with Dahr Jamail, March 9, 2008

- 03/14 - 03/16: Winter Soldier Iraq and Afghanistan. North Star Veterans for Peace and the Alaska Peace Center hold a local live streaming of the Winter Soldier hearings held in Washington DC
- 03/19: Five Years—Too Long Candle Light Vigil, 5th anniversary of US invasion of Iraq. March from APC to Veterans' Memorial Park and lighting of candles
- 03/28: APC monthly potluck: Peace Choir concert & showing of *San Francisco to Moscow walk for peace*. Introduction by Susan Osborne who participated in the march in the 1960's/70's

April 2008

- 04/05: Brainstorming session with facilitator Jack Heacock to plan the future direction of APC
- 04/11: Global Candle Light Vigil for the IRAQ Museum at the University of Alaska Museum Plaza. Co-sponsored with the Dept. of Anthropology at UAF, worldwide event organized by SAFE (Saving Antiquities for Everyone)
- 05/11 - 05/13: Don Ross at Northwest Conference for a Department of Peace, a Peace Alliance event in Vancouver, WA

May 2008

- 05/01: APC Monthly Potluck: Showing of *Robbing the Cradle of Civilization: The Looting of Iraq's Ancient Treasures*, a CBC documentary by Robin Bengier
- 05/01: VFP outreach campaign in front of Military bases. Members of North Star

Chapter 146 of Veterans for Peace in Fairbanks in front of Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks

- 05/17: Clucking Blossom at Birch Hill recreation center, Outreach by NNN, UAFCPJ, VFP and APC
- 05/30: APC Monthly Potluck: Showing of documentary *No End in Sight*



Global Candle Light Vigil for the Iraq Museum, University of Alaska Museum Plaza, Fairbanks, April 11, 2008

◆UPCOMING EVENTS◆

June 6 2008

FIRST FRIDAY at APC

Landscape from Alaska, Australia and California

Exhibit of Paintings and drawings by local artist and APC board member Ann Mallard.



Exhibit will be shown in June during Open Hours, Tuesday & Thursday 4-8 pm. (Peace Cards will be on

sale: 4 different sets representing 24 different Alaska scenes).

July 19, 2008

Golden Days Parade

Planning is underway for a float promoting peace and following this year's theme "49 states, 49 years celebrating the golden heart"...

August 1-9, 2008

Tanana Valley State Fair

This year again, APC will have a booth at the Fair and will need people to help. Let us know at info@alaskapeace.org if you want to join in staffing the booth.

Stay tuned for more information about our summer events through the email list...

◆ QUIZ ◆

Take a quiz on Humanitarian Law and the Occupation of Iraq

(from: <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/iraq/ihlfaqoccupation.htm>)

Questions

- 1) Would it be legal under international law for the U.S. to support Iraqi oil production so as to lower gas prices in the U.S.?
- 2) True or False: If a prisoner is accused of being a terrorist and has confessed to attacking occupying forces s/he may be detained indefinitely without trial until the end of the occupation.
- 3) When must prisoners of war be released?
- 4) Is an occupying power required to pay the salaries of state employees? That is, should U.S. taxpayers be paying the salaries of Iraqi social servants, police, medical workers?
- 5) In April of 2003 the Iraq National Museum was looted. Do the U.S. and the coalition have any liability under international law for this loss?

Answers

1) No. The occupying power must not use its authority to exploit the population or local resources for the benefit of its own population and territory. BUT it would be legal to support oil production in order to help Iraqis.

2) False: All prisoners are entitled to a trial. If the prisoner is detained as a terrorist, then that prisoner is entitled to a speedy trial. Combatant prisoners, taken as prisoners of war, can be detained until the end of the conflict.

3) The Third Geneva Convention provides that prisoners of war (POWs) shall be released and repatriated "without delay after the cessation of active hostilities." The Convention and the ICRC Commentary do not provide guidance on the phrase "without delay," but indicate that only practical concerns, and not political considerations, are relevant.

4) International humanitarian law does not specify that an occupying force is required to pay the salaries of all state employees. However, an occupying power has an obligation to ensure public order and safety, and provide necessary services such as health care. Public officials are needed for this and they must be paid a salary. The Fourth Geneva Convention on occupation provides that while an occupying power has the right to remove government employees, it also cannot compel persons to work without payment. From this the conclusion can be drawn that an occupying power must ensure that wages be paid to those state employees retained in their positions.

5) Under the Cultural Property Convention of 1954, cultural property is entitled to special protection; the occupying power must take measures to preserve and safeguard it.

The US was guilty of violating international law when, with substantial warnings from knowledgeable scholars, it failed to protect the Iraq National Museum and other cultural properties of Iraq.

* * *

X.....

ALASKA PEACE CENTER PLEDGE FORM

Name:.....

Address:.....

City/State/ZIP:

Phone:.....

e-mail:.....

May we add this email address to the APC's email list? ☐ Yes ☐ No

I am interested in volunteering two hours a month to staff APC open hours ☐ Yes ☐ No

My check for ☐ \$1000 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$_____ is enclosed.

Record my donation as a ☐ monthly ☐ quarterly ☐ annual pledge of support.

The Alaska Peace Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations APC are tax deductible.

Alaska Peace Center
507 Gaffney Road
Fairbanks, AK, 99701

The Alaska Peace Center is committed to nonviolent conflict resolution and to working for peace within ourselves, our community, and our world.
APC opened in 2005. It is a non profit organization with 501 (c)(3) status. APC meets on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month.

Board Members and Officers:

Don Ross, David Bantz, Alison Carter, Ann Mallard, Pete Bowers, Dick Heacock, David Koester, Stan Read, Claire Alix, Heather Koponen



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(907) 374-2822; email: info@alaskapeace.org

Website: www.alaskapeace.org

