

Special  
Edition

**THIS IS NOT A DRILL**

# Peace & Planet News

Summer  
2022

*Dedicated to Abolishing War, Establishing Justice, and Fighting Climate Disaster  
A Project of New York City Veterans For Peace*

## No Way Out But War?

By Chris Hedges

**P**ermanent war has cannibalized the country. It has created a social, political, and economic morass. Each new military debacle is another nail in the coffin of Pax Americana.

The United States, as the vote to provide nearly \$40 billion in aid to Ukraine illustrated, is trapped in the death spiral of unchecked militarism. No high speed trains. No universal health care. No viable COVID relief program. No respite from 8.3% inflation. No infrastructure programs to repair decaying roads and bridges, which require \$41.8 billion to fix the 43,586 structurally deficient bridges, on average 68 years old. No forgiveness of \$1.7 trillion in student debt. No addressing income inequality. No program to feed the 17 million children who go to bed hungry. No rational gun control or curbing of the epidemic of nihilistic violence and mass shootings. No help for the 100,000 Americans who die each year of

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Illustration: Mr. Fish

*Roger Waters:*

## Why I Must Speak Out



*Iconic rocker on  
why he stands for  
freedom and justice*

*This article was published in 2014, but we felt it remains just as relevant today.—  
The Editors*

By Roger Waters

**S**eventy years ago, my father—2nd Lt. Eric Fletcher Waters—died in Italy fighting the Nazis. He was a committed pacifist, and a conscientious objector at the start of the war, but as Hitler's crimes spread across Europe, he swapped the ambulance he had driven through the London blitz for a tin hat and a commission in the Royal Fusiliers and he joined the fight against fascism. He was killed near Aprilia in the battle for the Anzio Bridgehead on Feb. 18, 1944. My mother—Mary Duncan Waters—spent the rest of her life politically active, striving always to ensure that her children, and everyone else's children, had no Sword of Damocles in the form of the despised Nazi Creed or any other despicable creed hanging over their heads.

Thanks to the good people of Aprilia and Anzio, I was able to pay tribute to the father I never knew by unveiling a memo-

*continued on page 8 ...*



Dec.16, 2010: Mike Ferner being arrested and dragged off for civil resistance at the White House protesting U.S. wars. Photo: Ellen Davidson

## Editorial

# There Is No Planet B

By Mike Ferner

In his 1833 State of the Union address to Congress, President Andrew Jackson, arguably the worst U.S. President from the perspective of Native Americans, said, "That those tribes cannot exist surrounded by our settlements and in

pand. Even in temperate zones, summers become intolerable and ice disappears. Famine pursues the multiplying wildfires and droughts. Fascists are not only on the march but bending a growing number of governments to their will. Every day our personal experience shows us this is not a drill.

*Think about what it will take to save our Mother Earth and just do it. Do it with abandon. ... Do it simply out of love and because it's the right thing to do. ... Do it because this is not a drill.*

continual contact with our citizens is certain. Established in the midst of another and a superior race, and without appreciating the causes of their inferiority or seeking to control them, they must necessarily yield to the force of circumstances and ere long disappear."

Given how Jackson and North American culture treated the first people to occupy their continent, one could imagine that some native people took comfort from what Gandhi wrote in 1908 in Hind Swaraj, "Western civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed."

Prophetic words, indeed. But the climate crisis was unknown in 1908 and Gandhi had no way to foresee today's ongoing mass extinction event, the only one in the planet's history caused by the greed of just one species.

Friend, the signs are visible all around us: acidic, rising seas rout millions who have fewer places to go as deserts ex-

As military veterans, we are very familiar with drills. And we are very familiar with how it feels when your blood runs cold at the words, "This is not a drill!" That's why you'll often find Veterans For Peace members in the streets, on picket lines, calling out elected officials and getting arrested for civil disobedience.

In fact, we particularly relish what a beloved VFP member, historian Howard Zinn, once wrote:

"Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of leaders ... and millions have been killed because of this obedience. ... Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war, and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves ... (and) the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem."

That's the sense of urgency we continu-

ally try to get across to our fellow citizens at every opportunity. And those attending the Roger Waters "This Is Not A Drill" concert can add immensely to achieving a critical mass.

You already know this is not a drill. You already know we are not just under threat; that our home really is on fire; that there is no Planet B.

The time for polite rehearsals and standard tactics is long gone. Think about what it will take to save our Mother Earth and just do it. Do it with abandon. Do it because there is richness and solidarity and joy to be found in the doing. Do it simply out of love and because it's the right thing to do. The world will be the better for it regardless of how much time our species may have. Do it because this is not a drill.

Mike Ferner served as a Navy hospital Corpsman during the American War in Vietnam. He is a past president of Veterans For Peace and is the senior editor of Peace & Planet News. He is the author of Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran for Peace Reports from Iraq.

## I lived in the first century of world wars.

By Muriel Rukheyser

I lived in the first century of world wars.

Most mornings I would be more or less insane,

The newspapers would arrive with their careless stories,

The news would pour out of various devices

Interrupted by attempts to sell products to the unseen.

I would call my friends on other devices;

They would be more or less mad for similar reasons.

Slowly I would get to pen and paper, Make my poems for others unseen and unborn.

In the day I would be reminded of those men and women,

Brave, setting up signals across vast distances,

Considering a nameless way of living, of almost unimagined values.

As the lights darkened, as the lights of night brightened,

We would try to imagine them, try to find each other,

To construct peace, to make love, to reconcile

Waking with sleeping, ourselves with each other,

Ourselves with ourselves. We would try by any means

To reach the limits of ourselves, to reach beyond ourselves,

To let go the means, to wake.

I lived in the first century of these wars.



## Peace & Planet News

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# The Greatest Threat to Western Press Freedoms in Years

*The decision to extradite Julian Assange is a monument to the fraud of U.S. and British self-depictions.*

By Glenn Greenwald

The eleven-year persecution of Julian Assange was extended and escalated on Friday morning, June 17. British Home Secretary Priti Patel approved the U.S. extradition request to send Julian Assange to Virginia to stand trial on 18 felony charges under the 1917 Espionage Act and other statutes in connection with the 2010 publication by WikiLeaks of thousands of documents showing widespread corruption, deceit, and war crimes by U.S. and British authorities, along with their close dictatorial allies in the Middle East.

This decision is unsurprising—it has been obvious for years that the United States and UK are determined to destroy



People protest with t-shirts and Easter eggs at Largo di Torre Argentina in Rome April 11. Photo: Simona Granati-Corbis

Assange as punishment for his journalism exposing their crimes—yet it nonetheless further highlights the utter sham of American and British sermons about freedom, democracy, and a free press. Those performative self-glorifying spectacles are constantly deployed to justify these two countries' interference in and attacks on other nations, and to allow their citizens to feel a sense of superiority about the nature of their governments. After all, if the United States and UK stand for freedom and against tyranny, who could possibly oppose their wars and interventions in the name of advancing

such lofty goals and noble values?

Having reported on the Assange case for years, on countless occasions I've laid out the detailed background that led Assange and the United States to this point. There is thus no need to recount all of that again; Those interested can read the gran-

ular trajectory of this persecution here or here. Suffice to say, Assange—without having been convicted of any crime other than bail jumping, for which he long ago served out his 50-week sentence—has been in effective imprisonment for more than a decade.

In 2012, Ecuador granted Assange legal asylum from political persecution. It did so after the Swedish government refused to pledge that it would not exploit the WikiLeaks founder's travel to Sweden to answer sex assault accusations as a pretext to turn him over to the United States. Fearing what of course ended up happening—that the United States was determined to do everything possible to drag Assange back to U.S. soil despite his not being a U.S. citizen and never having spent more than a few days on U.S. soil, and intending to pressure their long-time-submissive Swedish allies to turn him over once he was on Swedish soil—the government of Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa concluded Assange's core civic rights were being denied and thus gave him refuge in the tiny Ecuadorian Embassy in London: the classic reason political asylum exists.

When Trump officials led by CIA Director Mike Pompeo bullied Correa's meek successor, ex-President Lenin Moreno, to withdraw that asylum in 2019, the London Police entered the embassy, arrested

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## Roe: A Radicalizing Turning Point?



Photo: Ellen Davidson

By Crystal Zevon

The Supreme Court's horrific decision to cancel *Roe v. Wade* may just turn out to be their worst nightmare. And, their worst nightmare may just turn out to be the friend those of us who have been struggling to radicalize the sleeping masses for years have been waiting for. As the Democrats, who have been dragging their feet on women's rights for years, instantly turn abortion rights into a campaign issue and a fundraising opportunity, this time people of all gender identities and expressions are seeing through the hypocrisy. The streets in cities across the country are filled with outrage. We are not going to take it anymore.

What may come as a surprise not only to the right-wing zealots who seek to impose their will and their rule over repro-

ductive rights, but also to the lackluster liberals who continue to look within party politics for change, are the calls for real revolution. Beyond reproductive rights, the shouts are echoing loud and clear for people-power, the right to housing, to medical care, to child care, to food, education and freedom from police brutality. And, it's not just the "usual suspects" anymore. People across the country are sick and tired of being played for fools, told about the importance of voting. It hasn't changed anything yet, and it won't. So get your pleas for funds out of our inboxes, because we won't be reading them. We'll be in the streets.

One protester's sign in Tucson puts it right: Public Cervix Announcement: Fuck You.

*Crystal Zevon is a longtime activist, writer, and videographer.*

## Join Veterans For Peace!



Photo: Ellen Davidson

**Veterans For Peace is an international organization made up of military veterans, military family members, and allies. We accept veteran members from all branches of service. We are dedicated to building a culture of peace, exposing the true causes and costs of war, and healing the wounds of war.**

**For more information or to join or donate, go to [veteransforpeace.org](http://veteransforpeace.org).**

# Violence and Memorial Day

By Michael McPhearson

I'm a veteran. On Memorial Day 2022, I am weighed down by death. Death and violence are at the core of the holiday. It is the day to honor military service members who died in our nation's wars and veterans who died after returning home. But this Memorial Day, with so many violent deaths and death reminders around me, the holiday is complex. Two years ago, George Floyd was murdered on May 25. I will probably forget the exact date, but I will never forget it happened on Memorial Day. The last three weeks have seen mass shootings in Buffalo, N.Y., with 10 dead and three injured; Laguna Woods, Calif., with one dead and five wounded; Chicago, with two dead and eight wounded; and the horror of Uvalde, Texas, with 19 children and three adults murdered. I can no longer compartmentalize one type of violence from another. The pain from war violence is the same as the agony caused by gun violence and police brutality. I know because I've seen the pain.

Once Memorial Day was simple. Unofficially marking the first day of summer, I celebrated like most people, having fun at BBQs and taking advantage of sales while also giving obligatory "Thank you for your service" to those in the nation's Armed Forces and veterans. I knew in theory that the purpose of the holiday was to honor service members who died in the nation's wars, but I did not understand what that meant.

My close contact with families who lost loved ones to gun violence and police aggression opened my eyes to the pain caused by violence. Lives turned upside down, vacant chairs at the Thanksgiving table, and unfillable holes in hearts. This emptiness is especially true for parents. We make sense of death by accepting the cycle of life and death seen in our families. Babies are born, they grow up, their parents turn old, the now-adult children have babies, the now-grandparents die, and the circle continues. Parents are not supposed to see their children die. It defies the process and breaks us.

Even though I witnessed parents struggle with losing



Michael McPhearson. Photo: Isabella Tjalve

their children to gun and police violence, I still rationalized the brutality of war as somehow different and more acceptable than violence at home. Clarity began in 2001 when the United States invaded Afghanistan and Iraq. First, I met military families with loved ones deployed and Gold Star families who lost a family member serving in the U.S. military. In 2003 I traveled to Iraq to observe the U.S. occupation firsthand and met Iraqis with family members killed by U.S. troops. I observed how their pain and the pain of the Gold Star families were the same. The depth of loss for both was nearly unbearable. I met service members who returned home, but their buddies died in Iraq and Afghanistan. I watched tough



New York City Veterans For Peace commemorated Memorial Day with a solemn procession remembering all those killed in war; the dove of the VFP flag was in marked contrast to the diving eagle at the center of the East Coast Memorial honoring American servicemembers killed in the Atlantic in World War II. Photo: Ellen Davidson

Marines kneeling at the foot of memorials, sobbing with inconsolable grief as they mourned their lost comrades. My son's deployment to Iraq was an extremely emotional time. I lived in perpetual fear that I would personally know the grief I witnessed others endure. Sometimes, I would break out in tears when I thought of him. The news that a soldier died in Iraq filled me with dread. Joy overcame me when I learned that it was not my son, followed immediately by guilt because I knew someone had lost their child.

Meeting Palestinians and Jews who lost loved ones in the Israel/Palestine conflict cemented my certainty about the senselessness of killing. The depth and intensity of their pain were no different. The deaths as unnecessary as all I had already seen.

When most people think of gun violence in the United States, we think of mass shootings, drive-bys, police killings, and murder. However, the deaths caused by the beforementioned are dwarfed by the number of suicides. In 2020, according to Pew Research, 45,222 people died from gun-related injuries; 54% were suicide (24,292). This information is essential to know as it relates to Memorial Day. The 2021 *Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report* from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) stated that in 2019, 17.2 Veterans died by suicide a day and that the adjusted suicide rate for veterans was 52.3% greater than for nonveterans.

How did my comrades die? The report went on to say, "Firearms accounted for 70.2% of male veteran suicides in 2019 (up from 69.6% in 2018) and 49.8% of female veteran suicides in 2019 (up from 41.1% in 2018)."

As a veteran, I am heartbroken that so many of my comrades in arms feel such deep pain that life is not worth living. I am outraged that after we veterans sacrifice our mental health for this nation, our country's gun obsession and selfish disregard for the harm they cause stand in the way of cultural change to protect veterans and, most notably, our children.

This Memorial Day, our nation is overwhelmed by death. It looms as a monstrous shadow cast by over a million lives lost to COVID. It seeks to smother us with violence driven by alienation and deep-seated hate. But we cannot let death win.

What are the answers? In the short term, we must do what it takes to control access to guns for people who clearly should not have them and address the nation's health crisis, but the solution that will solve the problem is cultural change.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called for a revolution in values.

"I'm convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radi-

cal revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, militarism and economic exploitation are incapable of being conquered."

Do not take his words as a simple call to defeat the giant triplets as he names them. They are a prescription to save us from our worst demons. They appeal to us to step into the role of our higher selves.

*My son's deployment to Iraq was an extremely emotional time. I lived in perpetual fear that I would personally know the grief I witnessed others endure. Sometimes, I would break out in tears when I thought of him.*

We must stand against violence by standing up for life. We must change our culture from one that celebrates violence to one that loathes using it. We must confront the suicide epidemic with acceptance and love. We must break the deep isolation felt by millions. We must see and accept each other.

Look around us and witness the carnage. It will not stop unless we stop it.

*Michael T. McPhearson is a U.S. Army Gulf War veteran and human rights, antiwar, and peace activist. He is the executive director for the South Seattle Emerald, an independent online newspaper that amplifies the authentic narratives of South Seattle. He is on the American Friends Service Committee Nobel Peace Prize Nominating Task Group and a board member of the ACLU of Washington. He is a founding co-chair of the Don't Shoot Coalition in Saint Louis, organized in the aftermath of the 2014 police killing of Michael Brown, Jr. He has served as national coordinator of United For Peace and Justice, Veterans For Peace (VFP) executive director and a VFP national board member. Michael worked closely with the Newark-based People's Organization for Progress and Saint Louis-centered Organization for Black Struggle. He publishes MTMDaily.com expressing his views on war and peace, politics, human rights, race, and other things.*

# Working to Change the Culture of Militarism

## *A different kind of commemoration by Boston Veterans For Peace*

By Nate Goldshlag

This past Memorial Day Veterans For Peace gathered at the Boston Common in a different way from the other veterans' groups. There were tens of thousands of U.S. flags, each representing someone from Massachusetts killed in a war. Remembering them is appropriate, but we have a different message. We mourn and remember all victims of war, from the World Wars to Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Ukraine, and many more. In the carnage, I am reminded of the words of Martin Lu-

sponsible for those. The U.S. government talks about war crimes in Ukraine committed by Russia and undoubtedly there are war crimes—war itself is a crime. But the United States does not even recognize the International Criminal Court which investigates war crimes, and has never been held to account for its own war crimes, which are on an exponentially larger scale.

This country is built on war, militarism, and violence. We see it in the massive number of individually owned guns and the huge number of mass shootings, including the latest of little girls and boys in Uvalde, Texas. We see it in the military parades, the cheering, USA USA, police violence mainly against black and brown people. We see it in the militarized police using weapons normally only used in war. We see it in the massive amount of money going to companies that produce weapons of death—

used without causing a worldwide holocaust and the end of civilization, if indeed we really are a civilized people.

And those flags—people say they honor the people represented by those flags, their sacrifice. But in the wars of the last 70 years, who did they sacrifice their lives for? It was for U.S. imperialism, big corporations, the arms merchants of death. What Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex is now called the MICIMATT by Ray McGovern—the Military Industrial Congressional Intelligence Media Academic Think Tank Complex. The United States has been spectacularly unsuccessful in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and yet we continue down this road of militarism and war. And on this day, we must remember all victims of war, and shout out that the

main victims of war are civilians—men, women, and children. War is never the answer. In Ukraine there must be serious negotiations and an end to the war. Sanctions are another form of warfare. They almost never work for their intended purpose, and they harm many other people other than those they are directed toward. As we remember the victims of war, we must work to change the culture of militarism and war to one of nonviolence and peace.

*Nate Goldshlag is a U.S. Army veteran. He is the coordinator of the Smedley Butler Brigade of Boston Veterans For Peace and a past National Veterans For Peace national board member and treasurer. His activism dates back to 1969, when he participated in the occupation of University Hall at Harvard.*

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*And those flags—people say they honor the people represented by those flags, their sacrifice. But in the wars of the last 70 years, who did they sacrifice their lives for?*

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ther King Jr.: “The greatest purveyor of violence in the world—my own government.” Yes, the awful invasion of Ukraine is a crime, but so are all the others. And by far most deaths in war are not soldiers but civilians. Estimates of those deaths are almost 2 million in Korea, 2–3 million in Vietnam, over a million in Iraq, hundreds of thousands in Afghanistan and Yemen. And it is my own government re-

Raytheon, Boeing, Northrup Grumman, Lockheed Martin, and the rest. War is good for business if you are in that business. We see it in massive bloated military budgets, now increased, to fuel the war in Ukraine. And note that the only people voting against the \$40 billion for Ukraine were Republicans. We see it in large amounts of money being spent on nuclear weapons, which cannot ever be



## A Female Combat Veteran with PTSD

By Jennifer Pacanowski

I have blue hair  
I wear dresses  
People ask me if I am a veteran's girlfriend or wife  
because I advocate  
And care so much about veterans' issues and rights

I am a female combat veteran with PTSD.  
But now, in an interesting twist of events  
I am a stepmom  
Of a nine-year-old girl named Juliana  
And a seven-year-old boy name Jaxon  
I have a service dog named Boo  
And a rescue dog named Moxie, also with a touch  
of the PTSD



I have days when my pain overflows onto the  
kitchen floor while  
I'm making lunch for the kids  
The dogs gather at my feet to comfort me, to brace  
my fall

We tell the children I cry because  
“My heart hurts from the war.”

Sometimes I sit alone and rock softly in the yellow chair  
My stomach aches  
My back screams  
Boo lays his head in my lap  
Moxie wiggles her tail, unsure

Juliana walks up the stairs  
She recognizes the look  
She walks over to me and brushes my bangs away from  
my face  
And says,  
“Everything is going to be okay.”  
And I believe her

Jaxon says I am 65% man  
Because of the way I drive like his Dad

Because of the way I talk (curse) like his Dad  
However, I am not

One night I woke from a nightmare  
Especially horrible since I had not had one in so long  
As if time had added to the potency of the flashback

Jaxon was sleeping with us  
I got up with a jolt and went into the living room  
To breathe, to write, to calm  
I could hear Jaxon whisper to his daddy,  
“Doesn't Jenny know dreams aren't real.”

I cried harder  
Unfortunately, my nightmares are real

Juliana says,  
“Jenny acts like a big kid.”

I laugh a lot since I met the kids  
And swim in the pool watching over them  
And some moments,  
I'm just me  
Not my PTSD  
I'm just me that loves my dogs unconditionally

I'm just Jenny  
The stepmom with the blue hair and tattoos that laughs  
a lot

# How Veterans Return From America's Wars

## *A trail of tears*

By Ann Jones

*This piece is an excerpt, adapted from Ann Jones's book They Were Soldiers: How the Wounded Return from America's Wars—The Untold Story, published by Dispatch Books/Haymarket Books.*

In 2010, I began to follow U.S. soldiers down a long trail of waste and sorrow that led from the battle spaces of Afghanistan to the emergency room of the trauma hospital at Bagram Air Base, where their catastrophic wounds were surgically treated and their condition stabilized. Then I accompanied some of them by cargo plane to Ramstein Air Base in Germany for more surgeries at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, or LRMC (pronounced Larm-See), the largest American hospital outside the United States.

Once stabilized again, those critical patients who survived would be taken by ambulance a short distance back to Ramstein, where a C-17 waited to fly them across the Atlantic to Dover Air Base in Delaware. There, tall, multilayered ambulances awaited the wounded for the last leg of their many-thousand-mile journey to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington D.C. or the Naval Hospital at Bethesda, Maryland, where, depending upon their injuries, they might remain for a year or two, or more.

Now, we are in Germany, halfway home. This evening, the ambulance from LRMC heading for the flight line at Ramstein will be full of critical-care patients, so I leave the hospital early and board the plane to watch the medical



teams bring them aboard. They've done this drill many times a week since the start of the Afghan War. They are practiced, efficient, and fast, and so we are soon in the air again. This time, with a full load.

Two rows of double bunks flank an aisle down the center of the C-17, all occupied by men tucked under homemade patchwork quilts emblazoned with flags and eagles, the handiwork of patriotic American women. Along the walls of the fuselage, on straight-backed seats of nylon mesh, sit

the ambulatory casualties from the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility (CASF), the holding ward for noncritical patients just off the flight line at Ramstein.

At the back of the plane, slung between stanchions, are four litters with critical care patients, and there among them is the same three-man CCAT (Critical Care Air Transport) team I accompanied on the flight from Afghanistan. They've been back and forth to Bagram again since then, but here they are in fresh brown insulated coveralls, clean shaven, calm,

cordial, the doctor busy making notes on a clipboard, the nurse and the respiratory therapist checking the monitors and machines on the SMEEDs. (A SMEED, or Special Medical Emergency Evacuation Device, is a raised aluminum table affixed to a patient's gurney.) Designed to bridge the patient's lower legs, a SMEED is now often used in the evacuation of soldiers who don't have any.

Here again is Marine Sergeant Wilkins, just as he was on the flight from Afghanistan: unconscious, sedated, intubated, and encased in a vacuum spine board. The doctor tells me that the staff at LRMC removed Wilkins's breathing tube, but they had to put it back. He remains in cold storage, like some pod-person in a sci-fi film. You can hardly see him in there, inside the black plastic pod. You can't determine if he is alive or dead without looking at the little needles on the dials of the machines on the SMEED. Are they wavering? Hard to tell.

### Flight Risk

The CCAT team has three other critical patients to think about. They are covered with white sheets and blankets, but it's easy to see that the second patient is missing both legs. His right hand is swathed in thick bandages, almost as fat as a football. His face is ripped and torn so that his features appear to be not quite where they belong, but pushed up and to one side—his nose split and turned askew. He's sedated and on a ventilator meant to assist his breathing, but his chest convulses as he struggles with the job.

The respiratory therapist hovers, checking monitors, adjusting a breathing tube, and the man quiets. But not for long. The IED blast that took off both his legs above the knee bypassed his pelvis to slam into

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## Erebus\*

By Doug Anderson

You have the dream again: monsoon season, jungle, a muddy village road; you are naked, a muddy village road; you are naked, stumbling along a paddy dike across an open field toward the village where C. W. killed all the pigs but once into the trees there is only thickening jungle, canopy hung with smoldering flares.

You stumble into an open field, cupping your balls, and from the next treeline you hear music, Motown, Aretha who used to throb from the mortar pits where the brothers slung round after round down the tubes, a little respect, and when you enter the village, ashamed, you see men you tagged dead and choppered out like sides of beef, grinning at you from around a fire, and the old women, the children

who didn't move quick enough, all the Cong, they are there too, and the ones from the day so many died you tore up your own clothes for bandages, all there and singing, lit amber by the fire.

What took you so long, Doc, they say. They ask you where you've been and you can't tell them. Over twenty years since you got lost coming home, and now you're back here in the stinking silt and hedgerows, shin deep in pigs, but this time naked and without a weapon.

And so you sit down with the dead. Reese with the white eyebrows wraps a poncho around your shoulders, tells you what it was like when he was dying, treeline crackling with machinegun fire you pounding on his chest to start his heart and him thinking, Easy, it's so quiet where I am, quiet and fine, and Ballard, blue black and thick-shouldered, telling you

he watched you working on his body from above, how you were white and sweat-soaked, your chest heaving, trying to find the exit wound and keep from being hit and how he wanted to tell you it was all right, it was fine, and Price, arms so long he could fold a sheet by himself, whom you crawled down into the stream bed to drag out by the heels, who lived to go home, to be killed in a dope deal two years later.

All of us are here, he says, sit down, we'll get you some clothes, you're home now, easy, remember what you used to say? You're going to be fine, my man, you're going home, just don't fade out on me, hey, what's your mother's maiden name?

\* Erebus was one of the primordial deities in Greek mythology, born out of the primeval void, Chaos. It was the personification of the deep darkness and shadows.

# Veterans Return

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his chest. He must have been doubled over, crouching, when he walked onto the bomb. The impact damaged his lungs in ways not yet fully understood, so that now when he breathes on his own, every breath costs him more than he has to give.

The CCAT team confers. To stop the convulsive effort to breathe, the doctor can paralyze him and let the ventilator do the work of respiration, but that means removing from his intestine the feeding tube pumping in the calories he needs to heal these catastrophic wounds. It's a fine line, and the team walks it for the next hour until it's clear the man needs rest more than nourishment. Then the doctor administers a drug, the body grows still as stone, and the soldier inside sleeps softly while the ventilator steadily breathes in and breathes out.

Patient number three is breathing on his own and fast asleep, a saline drip feeding into his arm. He looks okay, but for the flattening of the blanket under the SMEED. He's lost both legs, but both below the knee. He has his hands. He has his junk. Of these four patients, he's the one the military and the media will call "lucky." But the doctor doesn't call him that. He says, "You can't assess his injuries in comparison to those of other soldiers who happen to be on the same plane. You have to assess them in comparison to who he was before." He is a boy who used to have legs and now he doesn't.

The fourth CCAT patient is a darkly handsome kid who lost both legs to an IED. His right arm ends in a bulbous bandage, but something about its shape suggests the hand might still be all there. He's conscious and breathing on his own, vaguely gazing at a thin woman in blond

*He sits ramrod straight, wrapped in his blanket, and speaks through tight lips as if he fears what might come out of his mouth: 'I've been in the Army 26 years, and I can tell you it's a con.'*

boots and a light jacket who stands next to his litter and clutches at the rail as if to hold herself upright.

She was called to LRMC because her son was close to death, but she is now taking him home, what's left of him, alive. In the dim light, she looks dazed, but she leans over him and speaks into his ear and soon he sleeps. The doctor tells me that the boy, a Marine, lost one leg below the knee, and the other very high up—too high for him to wear a prosthetic leg.

"He'll be in a wheel chair," the doctor says. "It's doubtful he'll ever walk. His right arm is all there, but the hand is

blasted. He'll probably lose his fingers at least, but he may have enough of a hand left to power a wheel chair on his own. It's hard to say. He lost one testicle, too, and part of the penis and urethra. But he could still be fertile. There's a chance."

The cavernous plane is very cold. There's a blanket on each of the seats along the wall. I wrap myself up and sit down next to my military minder Sergeant Julian, mainly to stay out of the way of the CASF nurses who are busy checking on their patients, getting those on the

*'You can't assess his injuries in comparison to those of other soldiers who happen to be on the same plane. You have to assess them in comparison to who he was before.' He is a boy who used to have legs and now he doesn't.*

bunks well settled for the long flight. The mother of the handsome kid has also sunk into a seat next to her son's litter, but she leans forward, still clutching the bedrail as if to hang on to her boy. She has thrown a blanket around her like a cape, but even at a distance I can see that she's cold. I pick up a spare blanket and take it to her. She looks up as I hold it out to her wordlessly in the deafening plane. "I'm fine," she says, loudly enough for me to hear.

"Your son?"

"He's fine." She looks at him and changes tense. "He's going to be fine."

"That's good," I say.

"He's alive. He almost wasn't, but he's alive. He's fine."

I offer the blanket again. "Take it. Keep warm."

Later I notice that she has made a cocoon of the blankets and slumped over the adjacent seat to sleep. Only toward the end of the flight, when she must be feeling some relief that her son is going to survive it, does she begin to tell me about him. She got word of his injury when he was still in the field hospital in Helmand Province, and she arrived at LRMC from southern California the same day he was brought in from Bagram. Three days later, miraculously, she is bringing him home. Well, not home really, but to the States anyway, to the Naval hospital at Bethesda, Maryland.

Her son has an older brother who deployed once to Iraq and once to Afghanistan and now is safe at home in California. But this boy, a Marine, had a training accident that left him with a head injury requiring brain surgery. He was medically discharged, but reenlisted and was deployed to Afghanistan. He had been there two months when his unit was assigned to clean up an area another unit had officially cleared of Taliban. You remember the policy: clear, hold, and build. They were doing the hold part when he stepped on the IED. The other Marine, the one who can't breathe, was hit by the same blast, or maybe another one at the same time. "They told me how it happened," she says, "but I don't think I heard."

Months later, I will call her in California

to see how her son is getting along. He's still in the hospital. They're still working on his wounds. He's not doing any rehab yet. But the military moved him to San Diego so she and her husband can visit him often. She says he's doing "fine," though it will still be many months before he can come home.

In the meantime, her contractor husband has enlisted his friends to help widen doorways, lower light switches, build ramps, and reconstruct a bathroom on the ground floor for a boy in a wheelchair. It's

a weekend and I can hear them hammering as we talk on the phone. "They say he'll always be in a wheelchair," she says, her voice shaking. "I was in our pool this morning, and I realized that he'll never be able to get into it by himself. He loves the pool." I stay on the line, listening to her cry. She says, "He's a beautiful swimmer."

On the plane I talk to some of the ambulatory patients sitting along the walls, wrapped in blankets like so many Pash-tuns. Most are hurt just enough to have to



be out of action for a while. One boy got a boot caught in the door of an armored vehicle, an MRAP, that wasn't moving at the time. It's a long way down from the passenger seat. He broke his arm. He blurts this out, then tells me he worries about what he's going to say back at his home base. "I can't tell them I just fell out."

Another kid dropped a barbell in the gym and broke some bones in his foot. Two others hadn't recovered from chronic back pain and muscle spasms induced by carrying too much weight. Doctors sent them back downrange to their units two or three times and each time they broke down again. The painkillers had only left them dazed. One says, "Everything still hurts, and you can't remember what you're doing, so it makes you nervous. So now they're sending me home because I

guess maybe the pain doesn't make you so nervous in the U.S. of A."

One young man collapsed while jogging at a base in the Persian Gulf. "I need a new valve in my heart," he says, "so they're sending me home to get it done there. I'm really lucky they found it. The Army saved my life." His wife sits beside him, wearing a brand new Frankfurt sweatshirt and a bracelet dripping with gnomes. While the doctors at LRMC assessed her husband's cardiac function, she went shopping. She tells me confidentially, "I for sure didn't want to sit around any old hospital."

An older Army officer calls me over and gestures toward the empty seat by his side. He sits ramrod straight, wrapped in his blanket, and speaks through tight lips as if he fears what might come out of his mouth. "I've been in the Army 26 years," he says, "and I can tell you it's a con."

He has been an adviser to the chief counterterrorism officer in Iraq. It's hard even to imagine what's involved in work like that, but his version of his job description evidently failed to match the official checklist of his boss. He doesn't think much of military bosses or politicians or Americans in general who send the lowliest 1% to fight wars that make the other 1%, on the high end, "monu-fuckin'-mentally rich."

He says he's going home for "psych reasons" caused by "life," and he is never going to deploy again. He has two sons, 21 and 23, in college, "They won't have to

serve," he says. "Before that happens, I'll shoot them myself."

I ask if he has any particular reason to dislike the military so intensely. "War is absurd," he says. "Boys don't know any better. But for a grown man to be trapped in stupid wars—it's embarrassing, it's humiliating, it's absurd."

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*Ann Jones is a nonresident fellow of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. She is at work on a book about social democracy in Norway (and its absence in the United States). She is the author of several books, including Kabul in Winter: Life Without Peace in Afghanistan and most recently They Were Soldiers: How the Wounded Return from America's Wars—the Untold Story.*

# Roger Waters

... continued from page 1

rial in the town where he died and laying a wreath to honor him, and all the other fallen. Losing my father before I ever knew him and being brought up by a single, working mother who fought tirelessly for equality and justice colored my life in far-reaching ways and has driven all my work. And, at this point in my journey, I like to think that I pay tribute to both my parents each time I speak out in support of any beleaguered people denied the freedom and justice that I believe all of us deserve.

After visiting Israel in 2005 and the West Bank the following year, I was deeply moved and concerned by what I saw, and determined to add my voice to those searching for an equitable and lawful solution to the problem—for both Palestinians and Jews.

Given my upbringing, I really had no choice.

In 2005, Palestinian civil society appealed to people of conscience all over the world to act where governments had failed. They asked us to join their nonviolent movement—for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)—which aims to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, to secure equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel, and to uphold the right of Palestinian refugees to return to the cities and villages they were violently forced out of in 1948 and 1967.

After more than two decades of negotiations, the vulnerable Palestinian population still lives under occupation, while more land is taken, more illegal settlements built, and more Palestinians are imprisoned, injured or killed struggling for the right to live in dignity and peace, to raise their families, to till their land, to aspire to each and every human goal, just like the rest of us. The Palestinians' prolonged statelessness has made them among the most vulnerable of all peoples, particularly in their diaspora where, as now in Syria, they are subject, as stateless, powerless refugees, to targeted violence, from all sides in that bloody conflict, subject to unimaginable hardship and deprivation and, in many cases, particularly for the vulnerable young, to starvation.

What can we all do to advance the rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories, Israel and the diaspora? Well, BDS is a nonviolent, citizen-led movement that is grounded in universal principles of human rights for all people. All people! In consequence, I have determined that the BDS approach is one I can fully support.

I feel honored to stand in solidarity alongside my father and my mother, and alongside my Palestinian brothers and sisters, and so many others of all colors, faiths and circumstances from all over the world—including an ever-increasing number of courageous Jewish Americans and Israelis—who have also answered the call.

In the furor that exists in the U.S. today about BDS and the right and wrong of a cultural boycott of Israel, a



Veterans For Peace at a demonstration in Bil'in, Palestine. Photo: Ellen Davidson

quote from one of my heroes, Mahatma Gandhi, has been on my mind. He prophetically said, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." The BDS movement is fulfilling its promise and fits Gandhi's description. Once dismissed by many as a futile strategy that would "never work," BDS has gained much ground, bringing with it the expected backlash.

Divestment votes at major U.S. universities, European pension funds divesting from Israeli banks that do business with illegal Israeli settlements, and the high-profile parting of the ways between actor Scarlett Johansson and the global anti-poverty group Oxfam are symptoms of a growing resistance to the Israeli subjugation of the indigenous people of Palestine, and also, to the decades of occupation of land designated by the U.N. as a future state for the Palestinian people.

And with each new BDS headline, the ferocious reaction from the movement's critics, with Netanyahu and his AIPAC fulminations in the vanguard, has risen exponentially. I think it's safe to say BDS is in the "then they fight you" stage.

Some wrongly portray the boycott movement, which is modeled on the boycotts employed against Apartheid South Africa and used in the U.S. civil rights movement, to be an attack on the Israeli people or even on the Jewish people, as a whole. Nothing could be further from the truth. The movement recognizes universal human rights under the law for all people, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or color.

I do not claim to speak on behalf of the BDS movement, yet, as a vocal supporter, and because of my vis-

ibility in the music industry, I have become a natural target for those who wish to attack BDS, not by addressing the merits of its claims but, instead, by assigning hateful and racist motivations to BDS supporters like me. It has even been said, cruelly and wrongly, that I am a Nazi and an anti-Semite.

*I believe that the root of all injustice and oppression has always been the same—the dehumanization of the other. It is the obsession with Us and Them that can lead us, regardless of racial or religious identity, into the abyss.*

When I remarked in a recent interview on historical parallels, stating that I would not have played Vichy France or Berlin in World War II, it was not my intention to compare the Israelis to Nazis or the Holocaust to the decades-long oppression of the Palestinians. There is no comparison to the Holocaust. Nor did I intend or ever wish to compare the suffering of Jews then with the suffering of Palestinians now. Comparing suffering is a painful, grotesque and diminishing exercise that dishonors the specific memory of all our fallen loved ones.

I believe that the root of all injustice and oppression has always been the same—the dehumanization of the other. It is the obsession with Us and Them that can lead us, regardless of racial or religious identity, into the abyss.

Let us never forget that oppression begets more oppression, and the tree of fear and bigotry bears only bitter fruit. The end of the occupation of Palestine, should we all manage to secure it, will mean freedom for the occupied and the occupiers and freedom from the bitter taste of all those wasted years and lives. And that will be a great gift to the world.

"Ashes and diamonds  
Foe and friend  
We were all equal  
In the end."

Roger Waters is an internationally recognized and respected musician and social justice activist. He is embarking on a North American concert tour called *This Is Not a Drill*. More information at [rogerwaters.com](http://rogerwaters.com).

## The Gunners Dream

By Roger Waters

Floating down, through the clouds  
Memories come rushing up to meet me now  
But in the space between the heavens  
And the corner of some foreign field  
I had a dream  
I had a dream  
Goodbye Max, goodbye Ma  
After the service, when you're walking slowly to  
the car  
And the silver in her hair shines in the cold  
November air  
You hear the tolling bell and touch the silk in your lapel  
And as the teardrops rise to meet the comfort of  
the band  
You take her frail hand  
And hold on to the dream  
A place to stay, enough to eat

Somewhere, old heroes shuffle safely down the street  
Where you can speak out loud about your doubts  
and fears  
And what's more, no one ever disappears  
You never hear their standard issue kicking in  
your door  
You can relax on both sides of the tracks  
And maniacs don't blow holes in bandmen by  
remote control  
And everyone has recourse to the law  
And no one kills the children anymore  
No one kills the children anymore  
Night after night, going 'round and 'round my brain  
His dream is driving me insane  
In the corner of some foreign field  
The gunner sleeps tonight  
What's done is done  
We cannot just write off his final scene  
Take heed of the dream  
Take heed



# Road Trip

In early February Catherine and I drove from San Francisco Bay to the Finger Lakes of upstate New York. It was winter, not the best time to make the trip, but we'd bought a house in Canandaigua and we had an appointment to meet the moving van at our new home eight days down the road. Because every weather report promised a difficult winter, we decided against driving over the mountains and across the heartland on Interstate 80. Instead, we headed south through the San Joaquin Valley to Barstow, taking the southern route through Albuquerque, Amarillo, Oklahoma City, swinging north through St. Louis, and Cleveland, and on to Rochester and Canandaigua. Roughly 2,900 miles of good highway.

We still left with some trepidation. Every forecast predicted a bigger storm than the last forecast, but that wasn't the worst of it. I'd driven across five times and thumbed across six. This was Catherine's third road trip across. All of that, though, happened before thuggery was trending as an ideological position. California license plates, which in other times had made for social banter at truck stops, might be seen as a sign of our involvement in deep state agendas aimed not only at stealing the 2020 presidential election, but stealing the country from its rightful owners, the hardworking European American Christians who've earned everything they possess. The same people who kidded us about California license plates in years past might now approach our vehicle at a rest stop and want to know where we stand on the Great Replacement or Critical Race Theory.

To expect the usurpers of our anonymity to explain what they're talking about wouldn't work because not only are they not really asking us, they don't know what they're asking about. I mean, if they got their analyses of the two theories from rightwing television's most popular talking head, or if they got it secondhand from someone who watches him, they are confused individuals associating with confused individuals. They want to make it clear we are the problem in this country. We are coastal liberals who want to open the borders to the unwashed and have a form of American history taught that lays blame for slavery on our fourth graders. We want to give their land back to the Native people.

No one bothered us though. We drive a nice car and we're white and we're getting toward old. My hair no longer falls halfway down my back, Catherine doesn't wear flowered bell bottoms anymore. In all the times I've crossed the country on land, the worst that ever happened, other than the regular hassling by police, was one evening while I was thumbing in Terre Haute. A carload of guys drove by and threw beer cans at me, then turned around, came back and threw more beer cans, all of them empty.

But something did happen on our trip across this great land that startled me so much I didn't even tell Catherine about it. I didn't want to talk about it. I kept it to myself for over a week. Now, months later, I'm still not comfortable talking about it but my discomfort has shifted. At first it was because what I saw startled me so. Now my discomfort comes from the people I've shared it with not seeing the enormity of the problem represented by what

I saw. To me it seems like an iceberg has been spotted but most of us keep dancing to the ship's orchestra. I see what I saw as a serious problem that is organized yet out of view. Here's what happened.

Near Amarillo we pulled into a Pilot truck stop to fill the tank and use the facilities. Catherine went into the store while I pumped gas. A pickup pulled up to the pump behind me. A young guy hopped out and headed toward the store. He was about six feet tall, nice looking, muscular, with fair hair sheered short on the sides and clean-shaved cheeks. He wore work boots and jeans and a dark-blue t-shirt. On his head was a ball cap, off white with brown stitching across the front. The stitching spelled out "Reagan Bush '84."

Maybe everybody knows about this but me, I flashed, or maybe only people in the Texas Panhandle know about it and keep it to themselves. The guy looked healthy and



clear eyed and way too young to have any recollection of Reagan and Bush, which means some older folks have spun a tale of those two men that has motivated at least one person to wear a ball cap emblazoned with their names, yet it's not likely only one cap was made. It's possible a thousand or many more people are wearing "Reagan Bush '84" ball caps, so it's probably a movement.

Not much shuts me up but I didn't even have to try keeping the sighting of the cap to myself. A storm so fierce it was officially called Winter Storm Landon soon engulfed, taking all my attention, but I also was afraid to say anything about the cap because giving it voice would

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*To me it seems like an iceberg has been spotted but most of us keep dancing to the ship's orchestra. I see what I saw as a serious problem that is organized yet out of view.*

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help feed the madness. In my reticence I chewed on why people would wear "Reagan Bush '84" caps. Even with no explanation I was angry about what the cap might mean. That those two men should be lauded seemed the end of reason.

One hundred and thirty-eight members of Reagan's administration were investigated or indicted, and 21 one were convicted, placing it as the most corrupt administration of the 20th century. After eight years of Reagan's supply-side economics and dog-whistle racism, Bush ran for president and somehow won, and then pardoned the members of Reagan's entourage who'd been convicted. By doing so Bush set a fine example for every American who'd swallowed the Republican claim of being the law-and-order party. He set an example for all the citizens who believed laws should be obeyed and had voted for Bush because he said he did too, and he

set an example for those who think obeying laws is for suckers, and an example for those who hadn't made up their minds on the issue but did with Bush's gesture, giving all of us a spike in criminal activity.

The young man wearing the cap looked like he worked for a living. Maybe he worked on his father's thousand-acre spread or maybe he was the young father of three trying to make it in a hard country. Whatever his situation he was proud of his admiration for two white men who despite their personal wealth felt they should take advantage of the elected offices they held to grab more. Jane Austen in her novel *Emma*, calls the material comfort gained by taking advantage of your situation "the apparatus of happiness." Such an excess of wealth that possessions are acquired for the sake of doing so

Bush was rich every day of his life. Reagan, the son to an alcoholic shoe salesman, worked his way to leading roles in Hollywood movies and marriages to two attractive actresses. He was the governor of California before being elected to the highest office in the world. Along the way he forgot other people also struggled, forgot about helping those for whom life has been difficult, forgot the breaks he got simply by being born a white male in the United States. Reagan told stories about a welfare queen and without the words being spoken, affirmed the idea that Black people were too lazy to work, were promiscuous, were untrustworthy and relied on welfare checks and food stamps to purchase alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs, all paid for by hardworking breadwinners, mostly white Christian churchgo-

ers, even though most welfare checks went to white people. The shooting in the Buffalo supermarket is a direct result of the racist myths perpetuated and encouraged by wealthy white people.

I know a man whose email address suffix is @reagan.com. He is a professor at a Midwestern university. During our war in Viet Nam he was a Marine until he refused to put on his uniform. After a lot of yelling and threatening, they sent him to Great Lakes Naval Hospital and tried to convince him he had a nervous breakdown. All he had to do was put on his uniform and he'd be okay. He refused and eventually they gave him a medical discharge. We met shortly after that and were hippies together, worked in soup kitchens, shared apartments where we never locked the doors. We had some huge times. We escaped a raging apartment fire on a winter night in

Rochester, drove a truck from there down to Panama, split up and six months later got back together in San Francisco where we did crazy things for a couple years.

One of the brightest counter-culture disassemblers I knew, he eventually drifted toward the established order. The first indication was his involvement with a pyramid marketing company, then he began wearing a necktie. No one could believe it. He had been so quick with analyses of the establishment's monstrous machinations. But without telling any of us, he enrolled in college and went away.

He and I wrote letters and occasionally talked on the phone, and eventually sent emails. Around the time Old Garbage Mouth began to dominate the Republican party he stopped communicating with me. On the last phone call, we had he said, "What can I tell you? I'm a rac-

*continued on page 20 ...*

# Capitalism is Killing Our Children

By Betsy Piette

It is incomprehensible that Washington politicians could sit through the hours of gut-wrenching testimony from the loved ones of victims of recent gun violence in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas, and not be moved. Yet this seems to be the case.

Speakers included Uvalde teacher Arnulfo Reyes, who survived his own gun wounds. He tearfully described witnessing the shooter massacre 11 of his students. Pediatrician Dr. Roy Guerrero, who helped identify slain children including some who were decapitated, described one child identified only by her distinctive green sneakers. One 11-year-old student, Miah Cerrillo, tearfully described covering herself in another child's blood just to survive.

Garnell Whitfield Jr., whose 86-year-old mother Ruth Whitfield was a victim of the Buffalo massacre, pleaded with the politicians to do something: "You're elected to protect us, to protect our way of life. I ask every one of you to imagine the faces of your mothers, as you look at mine, and ask yourself, is there nothing that we can do?"

So many witnesses asked the House representatives:

"Why aren't you protecting the people you were elected to serve?"

Yet in truth they are.

Regardless of who voted for them, these politicians see their primary role as protectors of the profits of the capitalist class, in particular the interests of corporations and lobbyists, like those of the National Rifle Association, who fund their campaigns. They are servants of the capitalist state, and as such their job was never to protect the lives and well-being of the majority of people in the United States.

As of 2020 guns became the leading cause of death among people ages 1 to 19 in the United States, according to the Gun Violence Archive, which has documented



Veterans For Peace at the March for Our Lives, March 24, 2018. Photo: Ellen Davidson

at least 254 mass shootings in this country so far this year.

What is needed is a ban on the sales of assault weapons, like the AR-15 used by the Texas shooter. Developed as weapons of war, they were never intended for domestic and civilian use, yet millions flood the market in the United States today. So why is a ban not likely to happen in the U.S. under its current capitalist economic system?

## Children as Collateral Damage

Even as mass shootings were increasing, President Joe Biden and Congress hypocritically voted seven different times to spend hundreds of millions on weapons to be sent to Ukraine. U.S. weapons expenditures amount to \$135 million a day.

U.S. corporations have grown rich and powerful from imperialist wars. During the war in Vietnam, the image of a young Vietnamese girl badly burned by napalm helped fuel broader opposition to the war. Since then the imperialists have tried to desensitize the population at home to the violence it carries out around the world.

The United States stopped allowing reporters to cover combat zones during the

first Iraq war, unless they were embedded in U.S. battalions. They brushed aside the slaughter of children in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere as "collateral damage"—what happens in wars.

This policy now extends to schools in this country. Schools and neighborhoods are being turned into war zones, with children as collateral damage. This is the cost of allowing unfettered access to gun-sale markets for companies that produce weapons intended for war but increasingly sold to the public.

And the surplus of equipment produced for military conflicts abroad is increasingly made available for domestic use. Witness the police forces that used tanks and other combat equipment to attack activists protesting the police murders of George Floyd in 2020 and Michael Brown in 2014.

Biden and Congress want us to believe that state violence is disconnected from

the violence carried out by individuals. In truth, foreign policy is the extension of domestic—and it's a two-way street.

## Mass Outpouring in Protests

On June 11, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators turned out in Washington, D.C., and in over 400 other U.S. cities for protests against gun violence. The rallies were organized by March for Our Lives, first created by students who survived the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School mass shooting in 2018 in Parkland, Florida.

It is clear that people want to be safe while buying groceries or attending places of worship. Students want to be safe at school. At the same time, workers and oppressed people have the right to self-defense against white-supremacist forces, such as the 31 masked Patriot Front extremists who planned to attack an Idaho Pride event June 11.

In an effort to undermine this movement, on June 12 news surfaced that a group of 20 senators may have struck a bipartisan agreement on gun-safety measures. Their emerging package could require extra scrutiny for gun buyers under 21, grants to states to implement so-called red flag laws and new spending on mental health treatment and school safety.

Even if this measure managed to pass a Senate vote, it would do little to address the fundamental problem. Jacqueline Lugman with Black Agenda Report said it well:

"When the U.S. stops enabling the carnage all over the world as a business model, maybe then we'll stop seeing the blowback on our streets."

*Originally published by Workers World  
Betsy Piette writes for Workers World.*

## The Eagle

By Joy Harjo

When all is said and done and we must confront the pain and joy we have brought into this world, we would be well advised to take the path of the Indigenous people who, in their wisdom, know that the deepest inner truths lie outside of us. The eagle, rather than being an imperious symbol of American exceptionalism, is actually a cleansing force that can lead us into peace and beauty.

To pray you open your whole self  
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon  
To one whole voice that is you.  
And know there is more  
That you can't see, can't hear;  
Can't know except in moments  
Steadily growing, and in languages  
That aren't always sound but other  
Circles of motion.

Like eagle that Sunday morning  
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky  
In wind, swept our hearts clean  
With sacred wings.  
We see you, see ourselves and know  
That we must take the utmost care  
And kindness in all things.  
Breathe in, knowing we are made of  
All this, and breathe, knowing  
We are truly blessed because we  
Were born, and die soon within a  
True circle of motion,  
Like eagle rounding out the morning  
Inside us.  
We pray that it will be done  
In beauty.  
In beauty.

Photo: Red-winged blackbird riding a bald eagle by Jason McCarty

Photo: Ellen Davidson





# Post-Cold War NATO: From Europe's Guard Dog into America's Attack Dog

*From an ostensible defensive alliance, NATO has grown into an aggressor designed to promote 'rules' dictated by the United States*

By Scott Ritter

In late June, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, wrapped up its annual summit in Madrid. The one-time trans-Atlantic defensive alliance has, over the past three decades, transformed itself from the guardian of Western Europe into global cop, seeking to project militarily a so-called values- and rules-based posture.

NATO's first Secretary General, Lord Ismay, famously noted that the mission of the bloc was "to keep the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in." In short, NATO served as a wall against the physical expansion of the Soviet Union from the perch it had established in eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War. Likewise, the creation of NATO prevented a treaty from being concluded between Germany and the Soviet Union that would enable the reunification of Germany. And lastly, the existence of NATO mandated that the United States retain a significant full-time military presence in Europe, helping break America's traditional tendency toward isolationism.

At the Madrid Summit, NATO radically redefined its mission to reflect a new mantra, which could be encapsulated as "keep the Russians down, the Americans in, and the Chinese out." It is an aggressive—even hostile—posture, premised on sustaining Western (i.e., U.S.) supremacy. This mission is to be accomplished through the defense and promulgation of a so-called "rules-based international order" that exists only in the minds of its creators, which in this case is the United States and its allies in Europe. By seeking to expand its security umbrella into the Pacific, it also represents a radical break from past practice, which sought to keep NATO defined by the four corners of its trans-Atlantic birthright.

The guard dog had, it seems, been re-trained as an attack dog.

When an organization undergoes such a radical transformation in terms of its core mission and purpose, logic

dictates that there exists a reason (or reasons) sufficient to justify the consequences attached to the action. There appear to be three such reasons. First and foremost is the fact that Russia refuses to accept NATO demands that it exist as a junior "partner" whose sovereignty must be subordinated to the collective will of post-Cold War Europe. Russian President Vladimir Putin has made it clear that Russia considers itself to be a great power, and fully expects to be treated as such—especially when it comes to issues pertaining to the so-called "near abroad"—those former Soviet republics, such as Ukraine and Georgia, whose continued ties with Moscow are existential in nature.

NATO, on the other hand, while calling Russia a "partner," was never serious about extending a viable hand of friendship, instead undertaking a 30-year program of expansion that violated verbal promises made to Soviet leaders, leaving Russia weakened and not to be taken seriously by the self-proclaimed "victors" of the Cold War. When Russia pushed back, a process marked by Putin's iconic speech to the 2007 Munich Security Conference, NATO undertook a more aggressive stance, promising Georgia and Ukraine eventual membership in the Alliance and, in 2014, supporting a violent coup against a government in Ukraine that kicked off a series of events

that culminated in the ongoing military operation being conducted by Russia in Ukraine.

Speaking at this week's NATO Summit, the secretary general of the organization, Jen Stoltenberg, ended all pretense that the bloc was an innocent bystander in the events leading up to Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, noting with pride that NATO had been preparing to fight Russia since 2014—that is, since the U.S.-led coup.

Indeed, NATO has, since 2015, been training the Ukrainian military to NATO standards, not to bolster the self-defense of Ukraine, but rather for the purpose of fighting ethnic Russians in the Donbass. NATO, it seems, was never interested in a peaceful resolution to the crisis, which flared up when Ukrainian nationalists began brutalizing the region's Moscow-leaning majority.

Two NATO members, France and Germany, helped perpetuate a fraudulent peace process, the Minsk Accords, which former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko recently admitted was nothing more than a sham perpetrated for the purpose of buying time so NATO could train and equip the Ukrainian military for the purpose of forcibly seizing control of both Donbass and Crimea.

## What It Means for China

All the 2007 Munich Summit really did was strip away any pretense that NATO was serious about peacefully coexisting with a powerful, sovereign Russian nation. A truly defensive alliance would have readily embraced such an outcome. NATO, it is now clear, is anything but.

NATO has been exposed as little more than a component of U.S. global power projection, providing supplementary military and political backing for an American empire defined by the "rules-based international order" premised on sustained U.S. military and economic supremacy. Keeping America on top, however, is proving to be a bridge too far, largely because the U.S. empire itself is crumbling at its foundations, struggling economically to sustain the so-called "American Dream" and politically to keep alive the flawed promise of democracy that underpins the very image the United States seeks to promote abroad. The extent that the United States can function with a modicum of credibility in the international arena today is determined purely by the level of "buy-in" by the rest of the world to the golden idol that is the "rules-based international order."

While the United States has been able to strong-arm both NATO and its economic doppelganger, the G7, into actively promoting the "rules-based international order,"

*continued on page 14 ...*



Veterans take part in the protest at NATO's 2012 summit in Chicago. Photo: Ellen Davidson

# Hedges

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drug overdoses. No minimum wage of \$15 an hour to counter 44 years of wage stagnation. No respite from gas prices that are projected to hit \$6 a gallon.

The permanent war economy, implanted since the end of World War II, has destroyed the private economy, bankrupted the nation, and squandered trillions of dollars of taxpayer money. The monopolization of capital by the military has driven the US debt to \$30 trillion, \$6 trillion more than the US GDP. Servicing this debt costs \$300 billion a year. We spent more on the military, \$813 billion next year, than the next nine countries combined, including China and Russia.

Democrat or Republican, it does not matter. War is the *raison d'état* of the state. Extravagant military expenditures are justified in the name of “national security.” The nearly \$40 billion allocated for Ukraine, most of it going into the hands of weapons manufacturers, is only the beginning. Military strategists, who say the war will be long and protracted, are talking about \$4 or \$5 billion in military aid a month.

None of the very real threats seem to matter. The proposed budget for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in fiscal year 2023 is \$10.7 billion; the EPA's is \$11.9 billion. Ukraine alone gets more than double that amount. Pandemics and the climate emergency—afterthoughts. War is all that matters. This is a recipe for collective suicide.

There used to be three restraints to the avarice and bloodlust of the permanent war economy.

The first was the old liberal wing of the Democratic Party, led by politicians such as Senators George McGovern, Eugene McCarthy, and J. William Fulbright, who wrote *The Pentagon Propaganda Machine*. Today, self-identified progressives, a pitiful minority in Congress, from Barbara Lee—the single congressional vote opposing an open-ended authorization for the president to wage war in Afghanistan or anywhere else—to Ilhan Omar, now dutifully line up to fund the latest proxy war.

The second restraint was an independent media and academia, including journalists such as I.F. Stone and Neil Sheehan along with scholars such as Seymour Melman, author of *The Permanent War Economy and Pentagon Capitalism: The Political Economy of War*.

Third, and perhaps most important, was an organized antiwar movement, led by religious leaders such as Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King Jr. and the Berrigans, plus groups

such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). They understood that unchecked militarism was a fatal disease.

None of these opposition forces, which did not reverse the permanent war economy but curbed its excesses, now exist. The two ruling parties have been bought by corporations. The press is anemic and obsequious. Propagandists for permanent war, largely from right-wing think tanks funded by the war industry, along with former military and intelligence officials, are exclusively quoted or interviewed as military experts. NBC's *Meet the Press* aired a segment May 13 in which officials from Center for a New American Security (CNAS) simulated what a war with China over Taiwan might look like, featuring the co-founder of CNAS, Michèle Flournoy, who wrote in 2020 in *Foreign Affairs* that the United States needs to develop “the capability to credibly threaten to sink all of China's military vessels, submarines and merchant ships in the South China Sea within 72 hours.”

The handful of antimilitarists and critics of empire from the left, such as Noam Chomsky, and the right, such as Ron Paul, have been declared persona non grata by a compliant media. Liberals have retreated into boutique activism where issues of class, capitalism and militarism are jettisoned for “cancel culture,” multiculturalism and identity politics. The war in Iraq saw them join significant street protests but Ukraine is embraced as the latest crusade for freedom and democracy against the new Hitler.

Since all we do is war, all proposed solutions are military. This accelerates our decline, as the defeat in Vietnam and the squandering of \$8 trillion in the futile wars in the Middle East illustrate. War and sanctions, it is believed, will cripple Russia, rich in gas and natural resources. War, or the threat of war, will curb the growing economic and military clout of China.

These are demented and dangerous fantasies, perpetrated by a ruling class that has severed itself from reality. Once the militarists cripple Russia, the plan goes, they will focus military aggression on the Indo-Pacific, dominating what Hillary Clinton referred to as “the American Sea.”

You cannot talk about war without talking about markets. The United States, whose growth rate has fallen below 2%, while China's growth rate is 8.1%, has turned to military aggression to bolster its sagging economy. If the United States can sever Russian gas supplies to Europe, it will force Europeans to buy from the United States. U.S. firms, at the same time, would be happy to replace the Chinese Communist Party, even if they must do it through the threat of war, to open unfettered access to Chinese markets. War,



if it did break out with China, would devastate the global economies. But that doesn't mean it won't happen.

War is a desperate Hail Mary, one employed by dying empires throughout history with catastrophic consequences. “It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this instilled in Sparta that made war inevitable,” Thucydides noted in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

A key component of the permanent war state was the creation of the All-Volunteer Force which allows the children of the middle class, who led the Vietnam antiwar movement, to avoid service. It protects the military from internal revolts carried out by troops during the Vietnam War.

Oddly, though, the All-Volunteer Force, by limiting the pool of available troops, makes the global ambitions of the militarists impossible. Desperate to maintain troop levels in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military arbitrarily extended active-duty contracts and bolstered the number of troops by hiring private military contractors. Increased troop levels would not have won the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but the tiny percentage of those willing to serve in the military (only 7% of the U.S. population are veterans) is an unacknowledged Achilles heel for the militarists.

“As a consequence, the problem of too much war and too few soldiers eludes serious scrutiny,” writes historian and retired Army Colonel Andrew Bacevich in *After the Apocalypse: America's Role in a World Transformed*.

“Expectations of technology bridging that gap avoid asking the most fundamental questions: Does the United States possess the military wherewithal to oblige adversaries to endorse its claim of being history's indispensable nation? And if the answer is no, as the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq suggest, wouldn't it make sense for Washington to temper its ambitions accordingly?”

This question, as Bacevich points out, is “anathema.” Military strategists assume that coming wars won't look anything like past wars.

The political class is as self-deluded as the generals. It refuses to accept the emergence of a multipolar world and the decline of U.S. power. It speaks in the outdated language of American exceptionalism, believing it has the right to impose its will as the leader of the “free world.” On Feb. 19, 1998, on NBC's *Today Show*, then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, “If we have to use force it is because we are Americans; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall, and we see further than other countries into the future.”

This demented vision of unrivaled U.S. global supremacy, not to mention unrivaled goodness and virtue, blinds the establishment. The military strikes they used in the Middle East swiftly spawned jihadist terror and prolonged warfare. None of them saw it coming until the

continued on next page ...

## Dear America

Remember me?

I was the girl next door.

Remember when I was 13, America, and rode on top of the fire engine in the Memorial Day parade? I'd won an essay contest on what it meant to be a proud American.

And it was always me, America, the cheerleader, the Girl Scout, who marched in front of the high school band ... carrying our flag ... the tallest ... the proudest ...

And remember, America, you gave me the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award for patriotism, and I was only sixteen.

And then you sent me to war, America, along with thousands of other men and women who loved you. It's Memorial Day, America. Do you hear the flags snapping in the wind? There's a big sale at Macy's, and there's a big parade in Washington for the veterans.

But it's not the American flag or the sound of drums I hear—I hear a helicopter coming in—I smell the burning of human flesh. It's Thomas, America, the young Black kid from Atlanta, my patient, burned by an exploding gas tank. I remember how his courage kept him alive that day, America, and I clung to his only finger and whispered over and over again how proud you were of him, America—and he died.



Peggy Akers serving as a nurse in Vietnam.

And Pham ... He was only eight, America, and you sprayed him with napalm and his skin fell off in my hands and he screamed as I tried to comfort him.

And America, what did you do with Robbie, the young kid I sat next to on the plane to Viet Nam? His friends told me a piece of shrapnel ripped through his young heart—he was only seventeen—it was his first time away from home. What did you tell his mother and father, America?

Hold us America ...

Hold all your children America. Allen will never hold anyone again. He left both his arms and legs back there. He left them for you, America.

America, you never told me that I'd have to put so many of your sons, the boys next door, in body bags.

You never told me ...

—Peggy Akers

... continued from previous page

jets slammed into the World Trade Center. Yet they cling to this absurd hallucination.

Imperialism was tolerated when it was able to project power abroad and raise living standards at home. It was tolerated when it restrained itself to covert interventions in Iran, Guatemala, and Indonesia. It went off the rails in Vietnam and the military defeats that followed accompanied a steady decline in living standards and eventually a series of economic policies and trade deals that deindustrialized and impoverished the country.

The establishment oligarchs distrust Donald Trump. He commits the heresy of questioning the sanctity of the American empire. Trump derided the invasion of Iraq as a “big, fat mistake.” He promised “to keep us out of endless war.” Trump was repeatedly questioned about his relationship with Vladimir Putin. Putin was “a killer,” one interviewer told him. “There are a lot of killers,” Trump retorted. “You think our country’s so innocent?” Trump dared to speak a truth that was to be forever unspoken, the militarists had sold out the American people.

Noam Chomsky took some heat for pointing out, correctly, that Trump is the “one statesman” who has laid out a “sensible” proposition to resolve the Russia-Ukraine crisis. The proposed solution included “facilitating negotiations instead of undermining them and moving toward establishing some kind of accommodation in Europe ... in which there are no military alliances but just mutual accommodation.”

Trump is too unfocused and mercurial to offer serious

policy solutions. He did set a timetable to withdraw from Afghanistan, but he also ratcheted up the economic war against Venezuela and reinstated crushing sanctions against Cuba and Iran, which the Obama administration had ended. He increased the military budget. He apparently flirted with carrying out a missile strike on Mex-

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ico to “destroy the drug labs.” But he talks a distaste for imperial mismanagement that resonates with the public, one that has every right to loath the smug mandarins that plunge us into one war after another. Trump lies like he breathes. But so do they.

The 57 Republicans who refused to support the \$40 billion aid package to Ukraine come out of the kooky con-

spiratorial world of Trump. They too are attacked and censored. But the longer Biden and the ruling class continue to pour resources into war at our expense, the more these protofascists, already set to wipe out Democratic gains in the House and the Senate this fall, will be ascendant. Marjorie Taylor Greene, during the debate on the aid package to Ukraine, which most members were not given time to closely examine, said: “\$40 billion dollars but there’s no baby formula for American mothers and babies.”

Democrat Jamie Raskin immediately attacked Greene for parroting the propaganda of Russian president Vladimir Putin.

Greene, like Trump, spoke a truth that resonates with a beleaguered public. The opposition to permanent war should have come from the tiny progressive wing of the Democratic Party, which unfortunately sold out to the craven party leadership. Greene is demented, but Raskin and the Democrats peddle their own brand of lunacy. We are going to pay a very steep price for this burlesque.

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*Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for 15 years for The New York Times, where he served as the Middle East Bureau Chief and Balkan Bureau Chief. He previously worked overseas for The Dallas Morning News, The Christian Science Monitor, and NPR. He is the host of the show The Chris Hedges Report. He is the author of numerous books, including America: The Farewell Tour and Our Class: Trauma and Transformation in an American Prison.*

# We Cannot Allow the Ukraine Crisis to Lead to Nuclear War!

By Gerry Condon

The war in Ukraine is extremely dangerous. It is killing and maiming thousands of innocent civilians. There can be no excuse for that. War is never the answer. Wall-to-wall media coverage is creating a war fever in the United States and Europe. What is absolutely needed is a ceasefire and negotiations to end the war as soon as possible. Instead, the Biden Administration is sending advanced weapons of war, and talking openly about breaking Russia’s back. Military budgets are being increased in the United States and Europe. Weapons manufacturers are making huge profits as people and animals are being killed and injured.

Most disturbing is the real possibility of nuclear war. Russian president Putin has hinted that he would resort to using tactical nuclear weapons if he determines that Russia’s existence is imperiled by the United States and NATO. Putin’s statements are consistent with Russia’s nuclear posture, which considers nuclear weapons to be a last resort defense against the superior conventional forces of NATO.

Leaders on all sides of this conflict are recklessly gambling with the fate of human civilization. This is unacceptable and must be reversed. We call on the Biden Administration to support diplomacy that respects the legitimate security concerns of both Ukraine and Russia. Short of a global nuclear catastrophe, this war will eventually end with a negotiated settlement, the contours of which are already widely known. So why not sooner rather than later?

On the positive side, if there is one, more people are aware of the danger of nuclear war than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. People are more open than ever to listen to what anti-nuclear activists have to say. We can build support for the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and for other measures to step back from the brink of nuclear war. We can call on all nine nuclear powers to pledge never to be the first to use nuclear weapons, and to take nuclear missiles off of hair-trigger alert.

## Golden Rule—Hope through Action

It is at this tenuous moment in human history and in this political climate that the *Golden Rule* peace boat will be sailing around the “Great Loop,” visiting scores of towns and cities throughout the Midwestern, Southern and Northeastern states.

From September 2022 through December 2023 *The Golden Rule* will sail around the eastern United States, called the “Great Loop,” on a mission to educate people about how they can help stop the possibility of nuclear war.

*The Golden Rule* will bring a strong message that people are ready to hear: Nuclear weapons are immoral and illegal, and they have to be abolished.

Through education and actions, Veterans For Peace and the Golden Rule Project are trying to prevent nuclear war.

This voyage could not be more timely.

A nuclear war could end life on Earth as we know it. As was stated in January by China, France, Russia, Great Britain, and the United States, “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”

U.S. citizens of all political loyalties can agree that nuclear war must be avoided at all costs. We must press our government to end its military adventures around the globe and to seek peace with Russia and China, as well as with all of the nations of the world. The people must demand that our government pursue good-faith negotiations—not only to end the war in Ukraine, but to abolish nuclear weapons once and for all.

*Gerry Condon is a former president of Veterans For Peace and is the president of the Golden Rule Project.*

*The trailer is out for the new documentary Golden Rule: The Journey for Peace; view the trailer at [redford-center.org/films/the-golden-rule](http://redford-center.org/films/the-golden-rule).*



*The Golden Rule sailing by the famous WWII Liberty ship, the SS Jeremiah O'Brian, docked at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco*

# Independent American and Russian Women Call for Peace

This letter came about in February through the work of American and Russian women participating in a dialogue and peacebuilding initiative founded in 2021 by Women Transforming Our Nuclear Legacy and the American Committee for U.S.-Russia Accord.

We are women from the United States and Russia who are deeply concerned about the risk of possible war between our two countries, who together possess over 90% of the world's nuclear weapons.

We are mothers, daughters, grandmothers, and we are sisters, one to another.

Today we stand with our sisters in Ukraine, East and West, whose families and country have been torn apart, have already suffered more than 14,000 deaths.

We stand together and we call for peace and diplomacy, with respect for all.

We are united in the belief that diplomacy, dialog, engagement, and exchange are urgently needed to end the current crisis and avert a catastrophic military conflict that could spiral out of control—even push the world to the precipice of nuclear war.



caused rising “deaths of despair,” declining life expectancy and extreme inequality, isn't it time to think anew?

How might we seize the day and lay out a 21st-century vision—that not only advances peace and security, but can unite the world—essentially a new realism? What could creative, humane diplomacy look like? If done thoughtfully, it could do more than resolve the standoff in Ukraine—it could pave the way for

Nadezhda Azhgikhina, Journalist, Feminist, Director, Moscow PEN, Board Member, Article 19

Natalia Bitten, Journalist and Feminist Sandra Cline, Trustee Emerita for Biosphere Foundation, Founder and Editor of Dance of the Spirit, Writer and Novelist

Dr. Ann Frisch, Prof. Emerita University of Wisconsin Oshkosh US; Chair Rotary Action Group for Peace Nuclear Weapons Education, Rotary Peace Champion 2017

Paula Garb, PhD, Fellow, Center for Peacemaking Practice at George Mason University

Dulcie Kugelman, Center for Citizen Peacebuilding

Cynthia Lazaroff, Founder, Women Transforming Our Nuclear Legacy and NuclearWakeUpCall.Earth, Board Member, American Committee for US-Russia Accord

Sarah Lindemann-Komarova, Writer, Researcher and Activist

Olga Malutina, Artist

Eva Merkacheva, Investigative Journalist, Member of Human Rights Council of Russia

Galina Michaleva, Chairwoman of the Gender Faction, Yabloko Party, Russia Larisa Mikhaylova, PhD, Senior Re-

searcher at Journalism Department, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russian Society of American Culture Studies Academic Secretary

Galya Morrell, “Cold Artist,” Polar Explorer and Visual Artist, Co-Founder, Citizen Diplomacy Initiative, “Arctic Without Borders”

Marina Pislakova-Parker, Ph.D Sociology, Founder and Chair of the Board, ANNA—Center for the Prevention of Violence, Author, Researcher

Joan Porter, Community Activist

Lubov Shtyleva, Long-term President, Women's Congress of Kola Peninsula and Board Member, Vyi i Myi Magazine

Karen Sperling, Author and Publisher Svetlana Svistunova, Journalist and Filmmaker

Katrina vanden Heuvel, Editorial Director and Publisher, The Nation magazine, Board Member, American Committee for US-Russia Accord

Elizaveta Vedina, Artist, Illustrator Ann Wright, Colonel, US Army (ret.) and former US Diplomat, Veterans For Peace Advisory Board Member

Natalia Zhurina, Research and Education Officer, Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean

*For the United States and Russia, the only sane and humane course of action now is a principled commitment to clear, creative and persistent diplomacy—not military action. ... to redefine security so that women, families, and our children can live in peace.*

For the United States and Russia, the only sane and humane course of action now is a principled commitment to clear, creative and persistent diplomacy—not military action.

At this perilous juncture, rather than allocate blame, we should be seeking 21st-century alternatives to senseless military conflicts and wasteful spending on war. It is a time to redefine security so that women, families, and our children can live in peace.

At a time when we find ourselves in perhaps the most dangerous moment since the Cuban Missile Crisis, we call on the media in both our countries to stop fueling the flames of war. We call on the media to fulfill their ethical responsibility as journalists to remind us of the price of war, the bloodshed and loss of human lives, to demand evidence when claims are made that can escalate tensions, and to have the courage to sound the alarm on the risk of escalation to a nuclear war that would mean the end of life as we know it.

At a time when poverty is increasing in the United States, Ukraine and Russia, when the world collectively faces the existential threat of climate change, a pandemic that has taken 5.8 million lives and

broader cooperation between the United States, Russia, and Europe and beyond on climate, disarmament and more. It could lay the seeds for a new, demilitarized and shared security architecture.

We independent women, seekers of peace and security, understand the vital importance of engaging minds and hearts. We call on you to share this call for peace and urge our governments to keep talking, to pursue clear, creative, and persistent diplomacy.

These are times of fear but also of hope and possibility. The world is in motion, the future is not written. As Americans and Russians, we have a compelling stake in deescalating tensions between our countries. The approach we suggest surely is more realistic, more wise, than preparing for a military conflict that could lead to unthinkable nuclear war.

We stand together and we call for peace. Stand with us.

#WomenCall4PeaceUkraine

Signed,

Jackie Abramian, Writer

Dr. Susan H. Allen, Director, Center for Peacemaking Practice at George Mason University's Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution

## NATO

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Russia and China have come together to create an alternative worldview: international law, premised on the concepts enshrined in the U.N. Charter.

The G7 declared that the BRICS economic forum, composed of nations who are more aligned with a “law-based” world order, and not a U.S.-dominated “rules-based” one, represents the greatest threat to its relevance on the world stage. NATO, likewise, has declared that the Russian and Chinese challenge to the “rules-based international order” represents a major threat to NATO's core values, prompting an expansion of NATO's reach into the Pacific as a counter.

In short, NATO (together with the G7 group) is declaring war on the principles

of international law that are encapsulated in the U.N. Charter. At its Madrid Summit, NATO has made it clear that it's ready to shed blood to defend a legacy whose legitimacy exists only among the collective imaginations of its members. And not all of them, either.

The goal of the rest of the world now needs to be to seek to minimize the damage done by this beast and find a way to dispose of it before it can do any more harm to the global community.

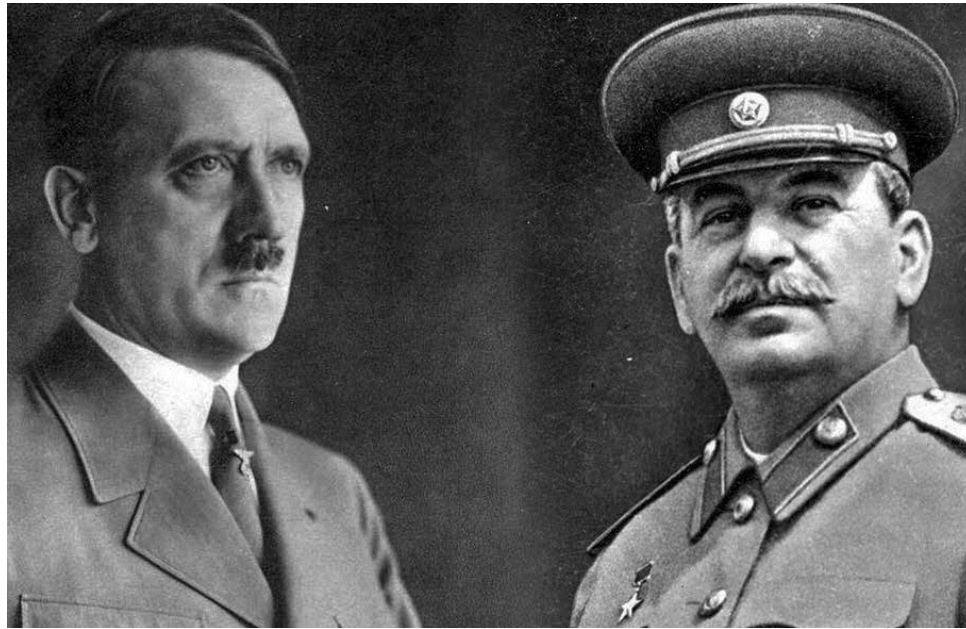
Scott Ritter is a former U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer and author of Disarmament in the Time of Perestroika: Arms Control and the End of the Soviet Union. He served in the Soviet Union as an inspector implementing the INF Treaty, in General Schwarzkopf's staff during the Gulf War, and from 1991 to 1998 as a U.N. weapons inspector.

# Berlin Munich Kyiv

The tide of public opinion in Germany is as overpowering—and changeable—as elsewhere: “Stop the Russian invasion!” “Defend Ukraine!” “Send money!” “More, bigger, farther-reaching weapons!” “Defeat Russia!” Sustaining this tide is an all-encompassing media campaign. No politician is exempt; even President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and ex-Chancellor Angela Merkel are pressured to make excuses for long-past efforts to achieve detente and decrease confrontation with Russia, now denounced as “appeasement.” (Steinmeier has abjectly apologized, Merkel stubbornly refuses to do so.) And the calls to defend Ukraine are expanding: now we are told to defend our “democratic rules of order” in a new crusade.

Every epoch has had its call to battle the Forces of Evil. Once it was Anarchism, then Bolshevism, Communism. After those menaces were defeated new ones were required; in 2001 it was Terrorism. With that frightening term eroding, it is being replaced by Authoritarianism. The gargoyle staring at us from magazine covers—after Stalin, Mao and Fidel have died and Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Gaddafi been eliminated—is now a scowling Putin. And with him Russia, which must be ostracized, sanctioned, wrecked, starved, and, above all, defeated. I have not yet heard any direct use of the word “bombed,” but the weapons are ready, with \$800 billion spent annually in the USA, about 13 times Russia’s military budget, not counting the others in NATO. In Germany, on top of its already huge military outlay, a special €100 billion fund was added, after receiving the required two-thirds parliamentary majority to overrule constitutional limitations. Its use is restricted to strengthening and modernizing the Bundeswehr, for F-35 planes, capable of dropping atomic bombs on Moscow in record time, for warships capable of landing at any shore, for latest-model, deadliest tanks.

All this is “to achieve security.” German borders are nowhere threatened, but the Ukraine invasion, it’s said, proves Putin’s plans to regain the area of the USSR or the czarist empire. So who knows? And any call to reason, to push for a truce and negotiations instead of demands to defeat and “ruin” Russia, oust Putin, and put him on



Stalin saw the pact with Hitler as necessitated by an existential threat.

trial, is denounced as appeasement, with allusions to the 1938 Munich Agreement, when Neville Chamberlain and French premier Daladier sold out Czechoslovakia.

I also see parallels, but very different ones. Hitler’s main aim, proclaimed in his Anti-Comintern Pact with Italy and Japan, was to invade and destroy the USSR, seizing the wealth of its giant expanse and moving closer toward hegemony, with Japan, of all Eurasia.

How did “the West” view such plans? In a secret meeting on Nov. 19 1937, Lord Halifax, Britain’s representative, congratulated Hitler “that the Fuehrer had not only achieved great things in Germany, but that by destroying communism in his own country he had blocked its way to Europe and that therefore Germany can rightly be regarded as a bulwark against Bolshevism.”

The West, though not itself fascist, admired Hitler’s hatred of the USSR and hoped he might attack and destroy it, thus eliminating any nasty socialist threat. It demonstrated this by supporting Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco in Spain, uttering hardly a whisper of disapproval of the Nazi takeover of Austria, agreeing to the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia which brought Germany to the Russian border, and rejecting calls by Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov in the League of Nations for “collective security” against German expansion. Litvinov’s hopes for unity against fascism died with the West’s speedy recognition of Franco’s victory on April 1, 1939. Within a week Stalin drew the consequential conclusion, ousted Litvinov and set his successor, Molotov, to making a deal with Germany.

As Litvinov commented: British and French leaders “had done everything they could to goad Hitler’s Germany against the Soviet Union by secret deals and provocative moves. ... The Soviet Government, in order to avoid an armed conflict with Germany in unfavorable circumstances and in a setting of complete isolation, was compelled to make the difficult choice and conclude a non-aggression treaty with Germany.”

The two years it gained made the Red Army’s liberation of Berlin possible, but

only after the death of over 50 million people, about 27 million of them Soviet citizens. The events following the West’s rejection of Litvinov’s “collective security” were bloody and devastating. So too are the events of 2022. Of course the world is very different and neither NATO, Putin nor Ukraine are Nazi Germany. But has it not been U.S. policy to push its NATO closer and closer to Russia, building up its neighbors militarily, with annually threatening border maneuvers, organizing prov-

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*[T]here can be only one answer to current escalation, with ever more powerful weaponry that will cost ever more lives, and the constant menace of atomic war.*

*The answer must be negotiations and peace*

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ocations like the putsch against an elected Ukrainian president in 2014 for wanting trade with both Russia and the West? Has it not been trying to totally surround Russia, weaken it economically, aiming at a final goal of “regime change” with a pawn like Yeltsin providing full access to a giant region and a ramp for an attack on the last big barrier to world hegemony, China? Doesn’t current U.S. (hence NATO) policy recall eastward pressures of the past—called “cordon sanitaire,” “containment,” or “rollback”?

That ugly agreement of Stalin with Hitler was necessitated by an overwhelmingly existential threat. Did Putin view the present scene similarly? We cannot tell. Of course he saw how Ukraine was being steadily armed with Javelin antitank missiles, modern artillery, drones and howitzers that fire deadly Excalibur shells “with pinpoint accuracy.” He most certainly knew of deadly, joint U.S.-Ukrainian “biological research facilities,” as admitted by Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland (the same official who guided the 2014 putsch in Kyiv). And we needn’t simply guess at what steps Washington would take if China conducted heavily armed maneuvers in Tijuana or Baja California; we can look up the Bay of Pigs invasion or

the attacks against Guatemala, Grenada, Panama, Dominican Republic, not to mention Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, all of them far distant from Washington or New York. Luckily, the toll in lives and damage in Ukraine has not approached that in some of those invasions. Of burning necessity today; those numbers must never be approached!

But even the most valid comparisons with past or present dangers cannot minimize the Putin government’s share in the guilt for present horror. Nor can they overcome worries that Putin may indeed be dreaming of Czar Peter, of a Greater Russia, denying Ukrainian rights to independence and sovereignty. Nor do accusations of Nazi rule justify the violation of international law, the wrecking of so many towns, cities and families, despite a very real Bandera cult and the strength of Azov thugs. [Stepan Bandera was a Ukrainian nationalist, politician and head of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, which was responsible for massacres and ethnic cleansing, and collaborated with Nazi Germany. The Azov Regiment began as a volunteer nationalist militia and is now part of the Ukrainian National Guard. They are known for using symbols associated with Nazism.—The editors] It is more than likely that a massive attack against the Russian-speaking Donbas republics was planned and Putin moved to prevent it. But was invasion the only method of prevention? I

cannot say.

There is much we do not know. But there can be only one answer to current escalation, with growing election-related American belligerency, ever more powerful weaponry which will cost ever more lives, mostly Ukrainian ones—and the constant menace of atomic war. The answer must be to pressure Biden and Johnson, Baerbock and Scholz to support negotiations and peace. Difficult as such a response may be, I think it must top the agenda, worldwide, of every progressive! And it also means welcoming similar conclusions by a very mixed crowd including Erdogan in Turkey, the Pope in Rome, courageous Lutheran leaders in Germany and even that old war hawk Kissinger.

The call for peace is also heard from inside Russia, despite attempts to silence it. I hope it bears fruit—but not for those Russians who yearn for a NATO victory—and one more regime takeover!

Victor Grossman is an American publicist and author who deserted from the U.S. Army during the Korean War and “defected” to East Germany. At 94, he remains a sharp observer of politics in Europe, particularly Germany. He studied journalism in East Germany and remained there working as a journalist and writer. He now lives in Germany.



Lord Halifax.

# Israel Systematically Targeting Journalists Before Abu Akleh Killing

## *Complaint filed with International Criminal Court two weeks earlier*

By Marjorie Cohn

Just two weeks before Israeli forces assassinated beloved Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, the International Federation of Journalists, the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate and the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians had submitted a formal complaint to the International Criminal Court accusing Israel of systematically targeting Palestinian journalists.

"The targeting of journalists and media organisations in Palestine violates the right to life and freedom of expression," said Anthony Bellanger, the general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists.

In a moment when the Israeli government's propaganda machine is working hard to keep mainstream news organizations mired in reporting on Israeli efforts to raise questions about who shot the bullet that killed Abu Akleh, we must insist on understanding her killing

covering an arrest operation by Israeli forces near the entrance to the Jenin refugee camp when she was assassinated. Although she was wearing a flak vest marked "PRESS," an Israeli military sniper shot her below the ear — the only part of her head not covered by her protective helmet — clearly evidencing an intent to kill.

Al Jazeera journalist Shatha Hanaysha, also wearing a helmet and vest labeled as press, tried to reach Abu Akleh, but soldiers "did not stop firing even after she collapsed," Hanaysha said. "I couldn't even extend my arm to pull her because of the shots. The army was adamant on shooting to kill."

Ali al-Samudi, another journalist with Al Jazeera who was also wearing a press vest, was shot in the back while covering the same event as Abu Akleh. He survived and is being treated for his wounds.

Thousands of mourners came out to honor Abu Akleh. To add insult to injury, as her casket was being carried through the streets, Israeli occupation forces attacked them, "beating and kicking the mourners," then "forcing pallbearers to nearly drop the coffin."

"Now, the occupying power has spoken back by shooting her in the head and attacking her mourners — a response that can only be classified as acute and multiterred state savagery, in keeping with Israel's modus operandi



Shireen Abu Akleh

(BDS) movement.

The BDS movement was launched by 170 Palestinian civil society organizations in 2005. It called for boycott, divestment and sanctions, described as "nonviolent punitive measures" that will last until Israel complies fully with international law by 1.) ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling its barrier wall (85 percent of which is on Palestinian land); 2.) recognizing the fundamental rights of Arab Palestinian citizens in Israel to full equality; and 3.) respecting, promoting and protecting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their land as mandated by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194.

The killing of Abu Akleh has led to calls for an independent, impartial investigation and galvanized opposition to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territory.

On May 13, UN human rights experts condemned Abu Akleh's killing, saying it "is part of a continuation of the high rate of attacks against media workers, particularly Palestinian journalists. More than 40 Palestinian journalists have reportedly been killed since 2000, with hundreds injured or targeted for violence."

Noting that 2021 marked the highest number of Palestinian deaths since Israel's 2014 Operation Protective Edge, the experts declared, "The unsustainable situation is inherent to the context of protracted military occupation, in which violence and repression are used to perpetuate a system of Palestinian subjugation." They called for "the dismantlement of the occupation, including the Gaza blockade and the illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem."

More than 6,000 people have signed a statement initiated by the antiwar and anti-imperialist group CODEPINK, calling for a thorough and impartial investigation of Abu Akleh's killing and the immediate suspension of United States military aid to Israel. The U.S. enables Israeli war crimes and its illegal occupation by providing it with \$3.8 billion in unconditional military assistance annually, in spite of the classification of Israel as an apartheid state by leading human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Israeli group B'Tselem.

The Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) said Abu Akleh's killing amounts to the war crime of willful killing under the ICC's Rome Statute. BNC called for accountability for the perpetrators, those who gave the orders, "and the entire political leadership of apartheid Israel."

"Though Israel killed Shireen Abu Akleh, her blood is also on the hands of the enablers, funders and defenders of apartheid, primarily the US, EU, UK, Canada and Australia," BNC noted in a statement. "We call for public BDS pressure to end the West's colonial hypocrisy and shameless complicity in Israeli crimes and ongoing Nakba against Indigenous Palestinians."

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*Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and a member of the national advisory boards of Assange Defense and Veterans For Peace, and the bureau of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. Her books include Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral and Geopolitical Issues. She is co-host of Law and Disorder radio.*



within the broader and ongoing context of Israeli violence against Palestinian journalists.

"It was revealing that the Israeli military spokesperson described Shireen and her colleague, Ali al-Samudi, who was shot in the back, as being 'armed with cameras, if you will permit me to say that,'" writes James Zogby in The Nation. "That is what good journalists do—they arm themselves with cameras and laptops. They witness events as they happen and tell stories so that readers and viewers can understand the human drama that is unfolding. It appears that Israel finds this profoundly—even existentially—threatening. Why else would they have killed dozens of Palestinian journalists in the past two decades?"

It was perhaps no accident that Israel targeted Abu Akleh on May 11, four days before Palestinians commemorated the 74-year anniversary of the Nakba (the Arabic word for "catastrophe"). On May 15, Palestinians mourn the violent founding of Israel on Palestinian land.

For 25 years, Abu Akleh had documented Israeli war crimes in the occupied Palestinian territory for Al Jazeera. "Abu Akleh herself embodied Palestinian humanity by speaking truth to power," Al Jazeera reported. She was

of refusing to let Palestinians live, die, or be buried in peace," writes Belen Fernandez at Al Jazeera

Assassinations (extrajudicial executions) constitute war crimes under the Geneva Conventions.

On March 3, 2021, Fatou Bensouda, the former ICC chief prosecutor, had announced that the ICC was mounting an investigation into war crimes committed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip since Israel's 2014 Operation Protective Edge, during which Israeli forces killed 2,251 Palestinians.

Bensouda found a reasonable basis to believe that Israeli forces committed war crimes — including willful killing, willfully causing serious injury, disproportionate use of force, and the transfer of Israelis into Palestinian territory. Bensouda also determined there was a reasonable basis to investigate possible war crimes by Palestinians, including intentional attacks against civilians, using civilians as human shields, and torture and willful killing.

In October 2021, Israel designated six leading Palestinian human rights groups as "terrorist" organizations with absolutely no evidence. This was done in retaliation for their support of the ICC investigation and the boycott, divestment and sanctions



# Dialogue, Displacement, and Despair

## Why Palestine is burning like never before

By Miko Peled

**O**CCUPIED PALESTINE—When no one is steering the ship, the wind, the currents, and the waves lead it into the depths. This is what is happening in Palestine. The Naqab is burning, Sheikh Jarrah is burning, young and old Palestinians are being killed everywhere, Gaza is practically under water with flooding, and Palestinian refugees are barely alive in camps throughout the region. Furthermore, in the U.S. capital there isn't a single entity that represents Palestine; and, in those rare capitals where some representation does exist, it is quite useless.

Palestinian refugees, both in Palestine and in the neighboring countries, not only are forgotten but are also being allowed to perish slowly as the world denies them meaningful relief. Living in camps built 75 years ago that were only supposed to house them temporarily. They are subjected to hunger, poverty, and constant bombardment and terrorizing by Israel. In addition to all of that, wars and massacres by various groups—usually working in collusion with Israel—have made their lives a living hell.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) was created to care for the Palestinian refugees, but it is not really able to care for all of them. The legal case for reparations and return is strong. However, the same study that made that legal case also revealed that there are legal distinctions between refugees, and, while these distinctions are unseen, they exist

and make a great deal of difference in what little relief refugees are able to receive.

The dismal funding UNRWA has received over the years was barely enough to allow the Palestinian refugees to survive. Then, in 2018, under Zionist direction, President Donald Trump proudly announced that his administration was going to end all funding to UNRWA. If that was not enough, according to a 2021 Al-Jazeera report, “The United Kingdom cut more than half its funding to UNRWA. It went from \$56.5 million in 2020 to \$27.6 [million in 2021].” The report also states that wealthy Gulf states that once contributed \$200 million provided only \$20 million in 2021.

According to a report by the Brookings Institution: “Nowhere are the UNRWA cuts more acute than in the Gaza Strip, where about two million souls inhabit a tiny area twice the size of Washington, D.C., that few can gain permission to leave. There, UNRWA provides services to 1.3 million people, spending about 40% of its overall budget. Roughly 262,000 boys and girls are enrolled in 267 UNRWA schools

the current reality it is wrong to present anything but urgency. People often quote polls that show that public opinion has changed, that young American Jews feel this way or that way about Israel and about Palestine. None of that is helping the people in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. It does not help the Palestinians in the Naqab, where 11,000 homes were demolished in a few short years, and who are now being attacked by militarized police units for saying “Enough!” It does not help the people in Gaza.

Optimism is good but it cannot take the place of urgency. Palestine is burning; it is being overrun by an armed, violent, racist, and ruthless regime that was democratically elected by the Israeli people. Israelis either cheer it on or sit idly by as the massive war machine they put in power destroys everything in its path. It is time for unprecedented, original, bold action that will stop the Zionist killing machine in its tracks and force change in Palestine.

In an interview I had recently published with Dr. Ghada Karmi, Dr. Karmi said, “I don't want to hear about how nice things are. Why don't you tell me why I can't go home?” The dialog industry promotes fake, feel-good exchanges between

## Blind Boone's Pianola Blues



By Tyehimba Jess

They said I wasn't smooth enough to beat their sharp machine. That my style was obsolete, that old rags had lost their gleam and lunge. That all I had left was a sucker punch that couldn't touch their invisible piano man with his wind up gutless guts of paper rolls. And so, I went and told them that before the night was through I'd prove what the son of an ex-slave could do: I dared them to put on their most twisty tune. To play it double-time while I listened from another room past the traffic sounds of the avenue below. To play it only once, then to let me show note for note how that scroll made its roll through Chopin or Bach or Beethoven's best. And if I failed to match my fingers and ears with the spinning gears of their invisible pneumatic piano scholar, I'd pay them the price of a thousand dollars. And what was in it for Boone? you might ask ... Might be the same thing that drives men through mountains at heart attack pace.

Might be just to prove some tasks ain't meant to be neatly played out on paper and into air, but rather should tear out from lung, heart and brain with a flair of flicked wrists and sly smile above the 88s ... and, of course, that ever-human weight of pride that swallows us when a thing's done just right ... But they were eager to prove me wrong. They chose their fastest machine with their trickiest song and stuck it in a room far down the hall from me. They didn't know how sharp I can see with these ears of mine—I caught every note even though they played it in triple time. And when I played it back to them even faster, I could feel the violent stares ... heard one mutter Lucky black bastard ... and that was my cue to rise, to take a bow in their smoldering silence and say, Not luck, my friend, but the science of touch and sweat and stubborn old toil. I'd bet these ten fingers against any coil of wire and parchment and pump. And I left them there to ponder the wonders of blindness as I walked out the door into the heat of the sun.



A Palestinian girl outside her family home during a cold spell in a slum on the outskirts of the Khan Younis refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, Jan. 19, 2022. Photo: Khalil Hamra

there. Twenty-two health clinics provide for millions of patient visits a year.”

In Lebanon, where the entire country is suffering from what seems to be an unprecedented economic crisis, Palestinian refugees are particularly vulnerable. According to a recent story in the *Palestine Chronicle*: “Not being able to obtain Lebanese citizenship, Palestinians cannot get Lebanese identity cards and therefore they cannot access social assistance and government services. To receive medical help or any other form of humanitarian aid, they need to turn to UNRWA and charities.

“As the demand for their services is rising and the costs of preparing food baskets or distributing medicines are going up, U.N. agencies and aid groups are struggling to cope with helping all those who need it ... Not only are the living conditions there very poor but refugees receive practically no support from the state.

“The situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon was dire even before the current crisis but now, faced with meager savings, limited employment opportunities, and skyrocketing inflation, they are destitute and unable to meet their basic needs.”

While many people like to add a touch of hope when speaking about Palestine, in

Israelis and Palestinians, which in turn are designed to create the illusion that there is hope. As though all that is needed is for us to sit together and get to know one another because deep down inside we are all well-meaning people.

At the end of all the meetings, camps, and weekend retreats, Israelis return to their privileged lives and the Palestinians to their reality of constant oppression. Israelis continue to serve in the military in all of its ugly forms, as reservists or professionals, and Palestinians return to the camps and villages where they live with targets marked on their backs.

The dialoe phenomenon tries to cover up the fact that millions of Palestinians are displaced and that despair is all that life has to offer them. But it provides no hope, no solution, only a guarantee that things will continue to get worse for Palestinians.

As the saying goes, if you're not mad—infuriated, actually—then you're not paying attention.

*Miko Peled is a MintPress News contributing writer, published author and human rights activist born in Jerusalem. His latest books are The General's Son: Journey of an Israeli in Palestine, and Injustice: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five.*

# A Tale of Two Summits

By Rick Sterling

There were two summits in Los Angeles June 8–10: the Summit of the Americas hosted by the U.S. State Department and the People's Summit hosted by U.S. and international activist organizations. The two summits were held in the same city at the same time but could not be otherwise more different.

Begun in 1994, in the heyday of U.S. international dominance, the Summit of the Americas is officially a function of the Organization of American States. It is meant to coordinate and consolidate U.S. economic, political, and cultural interests. The first summit, held in Miami, served this goal well. The Soviet Union had broken up, severely hurting allies like Cuba. Neoliberalism was on the march, even in countries like Nicaragua where the Sandinistas had been voted out of power. The United States had recently invaded Panama, making an murderous example of any country or leader that defied U.S. dictates.

Since 1994, there have been Summits of the Americas every three or four years. The summits in Canada (2001) and Argentina (2005) had large anti-summit protests against capitalist globalization. In Panama in 2015, Cuba was invited to the summit for the first time after a group

of countries threatened to boycott if Cuba was again excluded. President Obama met and shook hands with Cuban President Raul Castro. There was widespread agreement and pleasure at the United States beginning to normalize relations with Cuba.

In 2018, U.S. hostility to Cuba resumed under President Trump. The White House referred to Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela as a “troika of tyranny.”

The policy of exclusion continues under the Biden administration and this became a major feature of the just concluded Summit of the Americas. Despite threats to boycott the gathering by many Latin American and Caribbean presidents, the United States chose to exclude Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. This resulted in the presidents of seven countries choosing not to attend: Mexico, Bolivia, Honduras, St. Vincent, Antigua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) said simply, “There cannot be a summit of the Americas if all the countries of the American continent do not participate. Or there can be, but ... it is just a continuation of the old policy of interventionism, or disrespect of nations and their peoples.”

As it turned out, the absence of three excluded and seven allied leaders became a predominant feature of the summit. The



ghost of the 10 hung over all events. The summit accomplished little, with the lack of preparation being compared to a “privileged but lazy student” who does not prepare for a test. *The Atlantic* analyzed the situation: “The Summit of the Americas, hosted this year by Joe Biden, offers a measure of how far the U.S. has fallen.” Attendance was low and resolutions were filled with platitudes with little substance. Criticisms of the U.S. exclusion of countries were openly aired.

*The New York Times* described the summit by quoting a former Mexican ambassador, who said many countries are “challenging U.S. influence, because U.S. influence has been diminishing in the continent.”

At the Summit of the Americas, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and OAS leader Luis Almagro spoke at a panel on Journalistic freedom.” Journalist Walter Smolarek exposed the farce as he boldly confronted Almagro about his complicity in the 2019 Bolivian coup and more.

There was a plea from many countries to get beyond conflict and cold war, to genuinely work together to address the looming and already dangerous results of climate change.

The Summit of the Americas was expensive. Just the LA police security cost over \$15 million.

Two miles away from the Summit of the Americas, the People's Summit was

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## Leftist Gustavo Petro Wins Colombian Presidency

By Jake Johnson

Former guerrilla fighter and longtime lawmaker Gustavo Petro defeated a millionaire businessman viewed as Colombia's Donald Trump June 19 to become the South American nation's first leftist president-elect, riding a wave of mass anger over inequality, poverty, and the corruption of the right-wing political establishment.

“The government of hope has arrived,” Petro, a former member of the M-19 rebel organization that disarmed in 1990 and became an influential political party, told supporters gathered in Bogotá. “This story that we are writing today is a new

story for Colombia, for Latin America, for the world. We are not going to betray this electorate.”

Petro's running mate, environmental activist Francia Márquez, will become the first Black woman to serve as Colombia's vice president, spurring expectations that the new government will move to tackle surging deforestation in the Colombian Amazon and curb the nation's reliance on planet-warming fossil fuels. Petro, who will take office in August, campaigned on banning all new oil projects.

“Today all women win,” Márquez said June 19. “We are facing the greatest possibility of change in recent times.”

The leftist ticket's historic victory in a

nation long dominated by conservative elites—including current President Iván Duque—was met with enthusiastic applause throughout the region and across the globe.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the former Brazilian president who is favored to retake the post in October, said Petro's win “strengthens democracy and progressive forces in Latin America.”

Peru's leftist President Pedro Castillo hailed the election results as a “historic democratic victory” for Colombia and said that “we are united by a common feeling that seeks collective, social, and regional integration improvements for our peoples.”

“Brother Gustavo,” he added, “always count on the support of Peru.”

Former UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn joined the chorus of applause. “Incredible news from Colombia,” he wrote on Twitter, “with the election of a socialist president who has shown the power of community organizing to build a popular policy platform to heal the divisions of the past and bring about social justice.”

Petro's victory comes on the heels of widespread protests across Colombia in 2021, demonstrations sparked by a tax proposal from the Duque government that would have disproportionately hit the poor. An estimated 39% of Colombians lived on less than \$89 a month last year.

Protests over the tax plan, which Duque ultimately withdrew, quickly ballooned into broader uprisings over the country's widespread poverty, systematic inequities, and austerity. The Colombian police—often armed with U.S.-made weaponry—responded viciously to the demonstrations, and activists were arrested en masse.

“I ask the attorney general to release our young people,” Petro said during his victory speech on Sunday, prompting a jubilant response from the crowd of supporters.

In addition to vowing to democratize land ownership and combat poverty that has plagued Colombia for decades, the president-elect has pledged to end the nation's war on drugs, which it has waged alongside the U.S. for years to disastrous effect. Petro also campaigned on making

*‘We’ve been subjected to the right and the extreme right for more than 200 years ... and things here are bad, bad, bad. ... We need a change.’*

Colombia's public universities free and accessible to all.

Henry Perdomo, a 60-year-old manufacturing worker, told *The Washington Post* shortly after he cast his vote for Petro that “we’ve been subjected to the right and the extreme right for more than 200 years ... and things here are bad, bad, bad.”

“We need a change,” he added.

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*Jake Johnson is a staff writer for Common Dreams*



Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez: A new era for Colombia - BBC News

# Washington's Lethal Global Monroe Doctrine

Next year, 2023, will be the bicentennial of the Monroe Doctrine, when the United States asserted its hegemony over the American hemisphere. The malign spirit of the Monroe Doctrine not only continues but has now been extended by the U.S. government into a kind of Global Monroe Doctrine. In order to assert this preposterous claim on the entire planet, the United States has pursued a policy to “weaken” what it sees as “near peer rivals,” namely China and Russia.

The war in Ukraine demonstrates a qualitative escalation of U.S. willingness to use military force. In recent decades, the United States launched wars on developing countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Serbia. In these campaigns, the United States knew it enjoyed overwhelming military superiority and that there was no risk of a nuclear retaliation. However, in threatening to bring Ukraine into NATO, the United States was prepared to risk crossing what it knew to be the “red lines” of the nuclear-armed state of Russia. This raises two questions: why has the United States undertaken this escalation, and how far is the United States now prepared to go in the use of military force against not only the Global South but major powers such as China or Russia?

## Using Military Force to Compensate for Economic Decline

The answer to “why” is clear: the United States has lost in peaceful economic competition to developing countries in general and China in particular. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in 2016 China overtook the United States as the world’s largest economy. As of 2021, China accounted for



*The ultimate aim of this U.S. policy is to acquire ‘first strike’ capacity against Russia and China—the ability to inflict damage with a first use of nuclear weapons against Russia or China to the extent that it effectively prevents retaliation.*

19% of the global economy, compared to the United States at 16%. This gap is only growing wider, and, by 2027, the IMF projects that China’s economy will outsize the United States by nearly 30%. However, the United States has maintained unrivalled global military suprem-

acy—its military expenditure is larger than the next nine countries combined. Seeking to maintain unipolar global dominance, the United States is increasingly substituting peaceful economic competition with military force.

A good starting point to understand this

strategic shift in U.S. policy is the speech given by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on May 26. In it, Blinken openly admitted that the United States does not seek military equality with other states, but military supremacy, particularly with respect to China: “President Biden has instructed the Department of Defense to hold China as its pacing challenge, to ensure that our military stays ahead.” However, with nuclear-armed states such as China or Russia, military supremacy necessitates achieving nuclear supremacy—an escalation above and beyond the current war in Ukraine.

## The Pursuit of Nuclear Primacy

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the United States has systematically withdrawn from key treaties limiting the threat of use of nuclear weapons: in 2002, the United States unilaterally exited the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty; in 2019, it abandoned the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and, in 2020, withdrew from the Open Skies Treaty. Abandoning these treaties strengthened the U.S. ability to seek nuclear supremacy.

The ultimate aim of this U.S. policy is to acquire “first strike” capacity against Russia and China—the ability to inflict damage with a first use of nuclear weapons against Russia or China to the extent that it effectively prevents retaliation. As *Monthly Review* editor John Bellamy Foster noted in a comprehensive study of this U.S. nuclear buildup, even in the case of Russia—which possesses the world’s most advanced non-U.S. nuclear arsenal—this would ‘deny Moscow a viable second-strike option, effectively eliminating its nuclear deterrent altogether, through “decapitation.”’ In reality, the fallout and threat of nuclear winter from such a strike would threaten the entire world.

This policy of nuclear primacy has long been pursued by certain circles within Washington. In 2006, it was argued in the leading U.S. foreign policy journal *Foreign Affairs* that “It will probably soon be possible for the United States to destroy the long-range nuclear arsenals of Russia or China with a first strike.” Contrary to these hopes, the United States has not yet been able to achieve a first-strike capacity, but this is due to development of hypersonic missiles and other weapons by Russia and China—not a change in U.S. policy.

From its attacks on Global South countries to its increased willingness to go to war with a great power such as Russia to attempting to gain first-strike nuclear capacity, the logic behind the escalation of U.S. militarism is clear: the United States is increasingly employing military force to compensate for its economic decline. In this extremely dangerous period, it is vital for humanity that all progressive forces unite to meet this great threat.

In 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed and the Global South remained gripped by a never-ending debt crisis, the United States bombed Iraq despite entreaties from the Iraqi government

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## Diablo Canyon

*Trudell recounts his experience protesting the construction of a nuclear power plant in 1981, an action that resulted in the arrest of 1,900 activists.*

**By John Trudell**

Today I challenged the nukes  
The soldiers of the state Placed me in captivity  
Or so they thought  
They bound my wrists in their Plastic handcuffs  
Surrounding me with their  
Plastic minds and faces  
They ridiculed me  
But I could see through  
To the ridicule they brought  
On themselves  
They told me squat over there  
By the trash They left a solder to guard me  
I was the Vietcong  
I was Crazy Horse  
Little did they understand  
Squatting down in the earth  
They placed me with my power  
My power to laugh  
Laugh at their righteous wrong

Their sneers and their taunts  
Gave me clarity  
To see their powerlessness  
It was in the way they dressed  
And in the way they acted  
They viewed me as an enemy  
A threat to their rationalizations  
I felt pity for them  
Knowing they will never be free  
I was their captive  
But my heart was racing

Through the generations  
The memories of eternity  
It was beyond their reach  
I would be brought to the Internment camp  
To share my time with allies  
This time I almost wanted to believe you  
When you spoke of peace and love and  
Caring and duty and god and destiny  
But somehow the death in your eyes and  
Your bombs and your taxes and your  
Greed and your face-life told me  
This time I cannot afford to believe you



# Road Trip

... continued from page 9

I continued to send him emails but eventually he blocked them. A mutual acquaintance sent me a newspaper photo of him at a spring training baseball game where he was named Veteran of the Day. The photo is of my radical friend saluting the flag with his name on the jumbo screen behind him. I tell you that because of my suspicion his @reagan.com email address and the young guy's ball cap at the Amarillo truck stop are part of the same underground movement. One of the studied ways to defend your bad behavior is to accuse the other person of being the one who's doing it. What I see here is deep state behavior by the far right. While the left is denying the deep state exists, here may be evidence it does, except on the other side. I have no proof, only a ball cap and an email address.

I was writing this on my laptop in the hotel where we were snowed in for two nights, when it dawned on me that through the wonders of the internet I could see if those "Reagan Bush '84" ball caps are available to the masses.

A couple clicks and there they were, ball caps in seven color combinations including cammy. Sweatshirts too, and hoodies, tank tops, t-shirts (one with a map showing the 49 states won by Reagan and Bush in '84), and "Reagan Bush '84" flags. I'm not making this up.

If I were inclined to guess what the Reagan and Bush worshippers are up to, I'd guess they think they are protecting the United States from a takeover by people with different shades of skin and by people with sexual identities that make Reagan Bush people uneasy, and also by folks like me who aren't bothered by those peo-

ple living on their block. I'd guess they think of themselves as patriots. And I'd guess they take target practice.

Being patriotic is one of the easiest positions to take. Patriotism asks nothing of you but saying you love your country, which includes adoring the Stars and Stripes and supporting the troops. Give that any thought at all and you'll notice that being patriotic and supporting the troops is like vehemently being a fan of a pro football team. You wear their colors everywhere, catch all their games on television, put every emotional vibe in your body into the team winning, yet never get clobbered head on by a six foot seven, 280-pound pass rusher who has fans on his side who are as vehement as you.

If the world were a football field and borders were the lines of scrimmage, we would see that no borders exist unless they are being contested. The field would look like a park until two coaches put it into the heads of 22 boys to fight over it. If the borders are patrolled, if crossings are guarded, and ID must be shown, the border is contested. Always, even if the people feel animosity toward each other, as in Ireland—where the Papists and the Prods have been convinced their differences are the problem—the border is contested over a matter of wealth.

So the one man in Amarillo with the Reagan Bush '84 ballcap and my old friend with the Reagan email address may only be spectators to a game. Although the young man looked fit and my friend was fit the last time I saw him, they both may not be good enough to make the team. If you can't make the team, you pay to watch.

*Denny Riley is a USAF veteran of our war in Viet Nam. He is a lifetime member of Veterans For Peace and a staff writer for Peace & Planet News.*



March from People's Summit to Summit of the Americas.

## Summit

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held at the Los Angeles Technical Trade College. The People's Summit included an art and poster pavilion, a huge hall for panel discussions and speeches, and an outdoor pavilion featuring dozens of activist organizations and craftspeople. There was live music and dancing later at night. Over a thousand people attended and spirits were high.

The complex affair was organized by more than 10 convening organizations. These included the ANSWER Coalition, International Peoples Assembly, CODE-PINK Women for Peace, Service Employees International Union Local 721 and American Federal of Teachers Local 1521. More than 100 individuals provided support and organization for the event. Many activists flew or drove to Los Angeles from across the United States. In contrast with the Summit of the Americas, the People's Summit operated with volunteers on a shoestring budget.

A wide array of domestic and international issues were addressed at the People's Summit. They included Health as a Human Right, Gender Violence, Food Sovereignty and Climate Justice, Cultural Resistance, Youth Organizing Strategies, Justice for TPS and Undocumented Community, Lessons from Below, and Organizing Unhoused Communities.

In 2020, Los Angeles counted over 66,000 homeless people in the city. The latest survey, from January this year, is going to be released June 22. These and other issues were explored by activists at the People's Summit.

A major component of the People's Summit was international affairs and the connection to struggles at home. While the United States spends well over \$800 billion annually on the military, there are virtually no homes being built by the U.S. government. The Department of Housing and Urban Development offers rental assistance and advice. In contrast, Venezuela has constructed 4 million homes for Venezuelan families.

U.S. censorship and attacks on media critics were highlighted at the People's Summit, where Julian Assange's father and brother talked about the world's most famous imprisoned journalist and publisher. The WikiLeaks founder has been imprisoned for 10 years, with over three

years at Belmarsh maximum security prison. He is now threatened with extradition to the United States, a kangaroo court and life imprisonment. His only "crime" has been to reveal the real crimes of the U.S. military and government.

There was an outstanding lineup of speakers each of the three days of the People's Summit. These included local activists and indigenous leaders and noted international leaders such as Honduran Bertha Zuniga and Puerto Rican Oscar López Rivera.

The presidents of Cuba and Venezuela, plus Evo Morales, the former president of Bolivia, sent eloquent messages of support to the People's Summit.

On Friday, June 10, there was a mass march and rally from the People's Summit at the community college to the street in front of the Summit of the Americas. The streets of downtown Los Angeles echoed with calls, chants and songs as the march proceeded.

There is growing criticism of U.S. presumptions of supremacy and U.S. foreign policy promoting division and conflict. This was expressed by leaders who stayed away from the Summit of Americas and also many leaders who attended. The Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Amor Mottley, said frankly,

"It's wrong that Cuba and Venezuela and Nicaragua are not here, because as you heard from Bahamas, we need to speak with those with whom we disagree. ... There's too much narrow-casting instead of broadcasting. There's too much talking at, instead of talking with. ... And the simple priority must be people, not ideology."

U.S. exceptionalism and the exclusion of countries is increasingly being challenged. This matches the global criticisms of U.S. unilateral sanctions. At the last U.N. General Assembly, the vote was 184-2 to denounce U.S. embargo on Cuba. Seventy percent of world nations believes U.S. sanctions violate international law.

The Summit of the Americas showed the United States attempting and failing to impose its will on the hemisphere. The People's Summit showed a different vision which is in accord with the wishes of most countries and people.

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## Mercy Now

By Mary Gauthier

My father could use a little mercy now  
The fruits of his labor fall and rot slowly  
on the ground  
His work is almost over it won't be long,  
he won't be around  
I love my father, he could use some  
mercy now  
My brother could use a little mercy now  
He's a stranger to freedom, he's  
shackled to his fear and his doubt  
The pain that he lives in it's almost  
more than living will allow  
I love my brother, he could use some  
mercy now  
My church and my country could use a  
little mercy now  
As they sink into a poisoned pit it's  
going to take forever to climb out  
They carry the weight of the faithful  
who follow them down  
I love my church and country, they  
could use some mercy now  
Every living thing could use a little  
mercy now  
Only the hand of grace can end the race  
towards another mushroom cloud  
People in power, they'll do anything to  
keep their crown



I love life and life itself could use some  
mercy now  
Yeah, we all could use a little mercy  
now  
I know we don't deserve it but we need  
it anyhow  
We hang in the balance dangle 'tween  
hell and hallowed ground  
And every single one of us could use  
some mercy now  
Every single one of us could use some  
mercy now  
Every single one of us could use some  
mercy now

# Assange

... continued from page 3

Assange, and put him in the high-security Belmarsh prison (which the BBC in 2004 dubbed “the British Guantánamo”), where he has remained ever since.

After the lowest-level British court in early 2021 rejected the U.S. extradition request on the ground that Assange’s physical and mental health could not endure the U.S. prison system, Assange has lost every subsequent appeal. Last year, he was permitted to marry his long-time girlfriend, the British human rights lawyer Stella Morris Assange, who is also the mother of their two young children. An extremely unusual unanimity among press freedom and civil liberties groups was formed in early 2021 to urge the Biden Administration to cease its prosecution of Assange, but Biden officials—despite spending the Trump years masquerading as press freedom advocates—ignored them.

The Home Secretary’s decision this morning—with characteristic British subservience when it comes to the demands of

ize dissent against Wilson’s decision to involve the United States in World War I. It was used primarily to imprison antiwar leftists such as Eugene Debs, as well as antiwar religious leaders like Joseph Franklin Rutherford for the crime of publishing a book condemning Wilson’s foreign policy.

One of the most insidious despotic innovations of the Obama Administration was to repurpose and revitalize the Wilson-era Espionage Act as an all-purpose weapon to punish whistleblowers who denounced Obama’s policies. The Obama Justice Department under Attorney General Eric Holder prosecuted more whistleblowers under the Espionage Act of 1917 than all previous administrations combined—in fact, three times as many as all prior presidents combined. One whistleblower charged by Obama officials under that law is NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, who in 2013 revealed mass domestic spying of precisely the kind that Obama’s Director of National Intelligence James Clapper (now of CNN) falsely denied conducting when testifying to the Senate, which led to legislative curbs enacted by the U.S. Congress, and which courts have ruled unconstitutional and illegal.



on the part of the nation’s most powerful political officials. That 1917 law, in other words, is written to offer only show trials but not fair trials. No person in their right mind would willingly submit to prosecution and life imprisonment in the harshest American penitentiaries for an indictment brought under this fundamentally corrupted law.

Whatever else one might think of Assange, there is simply no question that he is one of the most consequential, pioneering, and accomplished journalists of his time. One could easily make the case that he occupies the top spot by himself. And that, of course, is precisely why he is in prison: because, just like free speech, “free press” guarantees in the United States and UK exist only on a piece of parchment and in theory. Citizens are free to do “journalism” as long as it does not disturb or

**One of the most insidious despotic innovations of the Obama Administration was to repurpose and revitalize the Wilson-era Espionage Act as an all-purpose weapon to punish whistleblowers.**

anger or impede real power centers. Employees of *The Washington Post* and CNN are “free” to say what they want as long as what they are saying is approved and directed by the CIA or the content of their “reporting” advances the interests of the Pentagon’s sprawling war machine.

Real journalists often face threats of prosecution, imprisonment or even murder, and sometimes even mean tweets. Much of the U.S. corporate media class has ignored Assange’s persecution or even cheered it precisely because he shames them, serving as a vivid mirror to show them what real journalism is and how they are completely bereft of it. And the U.S. and British governments have successfully exploited the petty jealousies and insecurities of their failed, vapid and pointless media servants to get away with imposing the single greatest threat to press freedom in the West without much protest at all.

CLARK KENT DECIDING THAT INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM IS WHAT AMERICA NEEDS TO SAVE ITSELF RATHER THAN THE POINTLESS PERPETUATION OF INTOXICATING VIOLENCE THAT HAS REINFORCED THE BOGUS NOTION THAT WE ARE ALL POWERLESS VICTIMS OF FATE FOREVER NEEDING TO BE RESCUED BY HEROES EXTERNAL TO OUR COLLECTIVE ABILITY TO SAVE OURSELVES



the United States—does not mean that Assange’s presence on U.S. soil is imminent. Under British law, Assange has the right to pursue a series of appeals contesting the Home Secretary’s decision, and will likely do so. Given that the British judiciary has more or less announced in advance their determination to follow the orders of their U.S. masters, it is difficult to see how these further proceedings will have any effect other than to delay the inevitable.

But putting oneself in Assange’s position, it is easy to see why he is so eager to avoid extradition for as long as possible. The Espionage Act of 1917 is a nasty and repressive piece of legislation. It was designed by Woodrow Wilson and his band of authoritarian progressives to criminal-

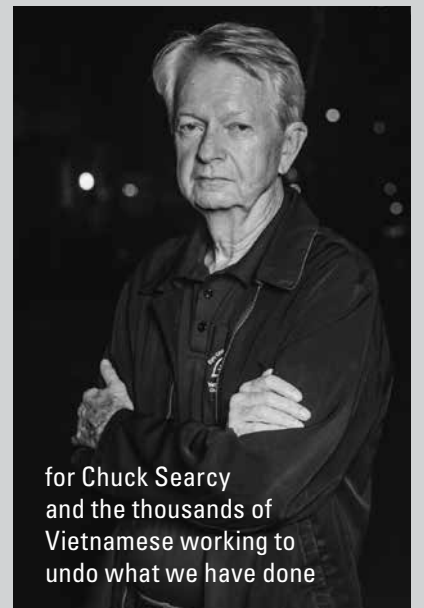
What makes this law so insidious is that, by design, it is almost impossible for the government to lose. As I detailed in a *Washington Post* op-ed when the indictment was first revealed—arguing why it poses the greatest threat to press freedoms in the West in years—this 1917 law is written as a “strict liability” statute, meaning that the defendant is not only guilty as soon as there is proof that they disclosed classified information without authorization, but they are also barred from raising a “justification” defense—meaning they cannot argue to the jury of their peers that it was not only permissible but morally necessary to disclose that information because of the serious wrongdoing and criminality it revealed

Free speech and press freedoms do not exist in reality in the United States or the UK. They are merely rhetorical instruments to propagandize their domestic population and justify and ennoble the various wars and other forms of subversion they constantly wage in other countries in the name of upholding values they themselves do not support. The Julian Assange persecution is a great personal tragedy, a political travesty and a grave danger to basic civic freedoms. But it is also a bright and enduring monument to the fraud and deceit that lies at the heart of these two governments’ depictions of who and what they are.

*This article was first published at [greenwald.substack.com](http://greenwald.substack.com).*

*Glenn Greenwald is a U.A. journalist, author, and lawyer. In 2014, he cofounded *The Intercept*, of which he was an editor until he resigned in October 2020. Greenwald subsequently started publishing on *Substack*.*

## Unexploded Ordnance: A Ballad



for Chuck Searcy and the thousands of Vietnamese working to undo what we have done

**By Doug Rawlings**

So I was maybe all of twenty-one when they whipped me into some kind of soul-less shape Yet another one of America’s weeping mothers’ sons sent forth into this world to raze, pillage, and rape

And now it’s coming on to another Christmas Eve and songs of joy and peace fill up our little town. How I ask myself could I possibly believe I could do what I did and not reap what I had sown?

In that land far away from what I call home a grandfather leads his granddaughter by the hand into a field where we did what had to be done.

They trip into a searing heat brighter than a thousand suns.

# Largest Ever U.S.-NATO Naval War Drills in Pacific Threaten Both Peace and Marine Life

*Military posturing in Asia-Pacific also risks nuclear war and potential extinction of the human species.*

By Ann Wright

While the world's attention is focused on the brutal Russia-Ukraine conflict, halfway around the world, in the Pacific Ocean, the competition/confrontation of the United States and NATO toward China and North Korea is taking an increasingly military turn.

Military responses to perceived national security issues by any of the countries in the region, whether it be North Korea, China, Russia, or the United States, will be disastrous for peoples over the entire planet.

The U.S. military's Indo-Pacific command, headquartered in Honolulu, Hawai'i, Rim of the Pacific or RIMPAC 2022, military war games, will have 38 ships from 26 countries, four submarines, 170 aircraft and 25,000 military personnel practicing naval war maneuvers in the Hawaiian waters from June 29 to August 4. Additionally, ground units from nine countries will come ashore on the islands of Hawai'i in amphibious landings.

## Citizen Opposition to RIMPAC

Many citizens of the 26 RIMPAC countries do not agree with their country's participation in the RIMPAC war games, calling them provocative and dangerous for the region.

The Pacific Peace Network, with members from countries/islands across the Pacific including Guåhan, Jeju Island, South Korea; Okinawa, Japan; Philippines; Northern Mariana Islands; Aotearoa (New Zealand); Australia; Hawai'i, and the United States, demands that RIMPAC be cancelled, calling the naval armada "dangerous, provocative, and destructive."

The network's petition for cancellation of RIMPAC states that "RIMPAC dramatically contributes to the destruction of the ecology system and aggravation of the climate crisis in the Pacific region. RIMPAC war forces will blow up decommissioned ships with missiles endangering marine mammals such as humpback whales, dolphins and Hawaiian monk seals and polluting the ocean with contaminants from the vessels. Land forces will conduct ground assaults that will tear up beaches where green sea turtles come to breed."

The petition rejects "the massive expenditure of funds on warmaking when



The USS Durham is sunk by missiles off of Hawaii as part of RIMPAC naval exercise.

humanity is suffering from lack of food, water and other life-sustaining elements. Human security is not based on military war drills, but on care for the planet and its inhabitants."

Other citizen groups in the Pacific region are adding their voices to the call to cancel RIMPAC.

*Military responses to perceived national security issues by any of the countries in the region, whether it be North Korea, China, Russia, or the United States, will be disastrous for peoples over the entire planet.*

In its statement about RIMPAC, the Hawaii-based Women's Voices, Women Speak declared that "RIMPAC causes ecological devastation, colonial violence and gun worship. RIMPAC's ship sinking, missile testing, and torpedo blasting have destroyed island ecosystems and disturbed sea creatures' wellbeing. This convening of military personnel promotes toxic masculinity; sex trafficking and violence against local populations."

In a June 14, 2022, opinion piece in the *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, the only statewide newspaper in Hawai'i, three local activists with the Hawai'i Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines wrote: "We are one with the people of Hawaii in opposing the U.S.-led wars, for which Balikatan (US-Philippine ground war maneuvers) and RIMPAC are warmups. As it is, our governments bring together the people of Hawaii and the people of the Philippines to prepare for war, death and destruction.

"Military posturing in the Asia-Pacific

also risks nuclear war and the potential extinction of the human species. We must instead work toward global cooperation to address the threats of climate change and biodiversity loss; to build toward peace, life and coexistence."

The citizen's petition to Cancel RIMPAC has individual signatures and or-

two major red lines the Russian government used to justify its war on Ukraine.

In the Pacific, NATO forces coming into the region greatly increase the tension with China and North Korea.

## Marine Mammals Endangered

Military naval events both in practice and in war are dangerous for humans and for marine mammals. The Russian-Ukrainian war is the most recent example. Scores of dolphins have turned up dead on the coasts of the Black Sea from that war.

Research scientists suggest that dolphins may be dying in Black Sea due to a large presence of Russian warships and Ukrainian responses to those ships disrupting the dolphins' communication pattern. The "intense ship noise and low-frequency sonars" interfere with the dolphins' main means of communication. Disruptive underwater noises may either have them end up losing their way in large fishing nets or around the Black Sea shores."

According to a report by the UK *Guardian*, researchers believe that heightened noise pollution in the northern Black Sea caused by around 20 Russian navy vessels and ongoing military activities might have driven the dolphins south to the Turkish and Bulgarian coasts.

The Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TÜDAV) announced recently that more than 80 dolphins were found dead across the country's western Black Sea coast, "an extraordinary increase" in the number of marine mammals found dead in a typical year. A recent video from the Black Sea documents some of the 80 dead dolphins.

Several studies in the past have con-

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# Whales

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riad of routine naval exercises. Needless to say, these ecocidal activities dramatically decrease the ocean's abilities to mitigate climate catastrophe.

The most lethal component to whales is sonar, used to detect submarines. Whales will go to great lengths to get away from the deadly rolls of sonar waves. They "will swim hundreds of miles ... and even beach themselves" in groups in order to escape sonar, according to an article in *Scientific American*. Necropsies have revealed bleeding from the eyes and ears, caused by too-rapid changes in depths as whales try to flee the sonar, revealed the article.

Low levels of sonar that may not directly damage whales could still harm them by triggering behavioral changes. According to an article in *Nature*, a 2006 UK military study used an array of hydrophones to listen for whale sounds during marine maneuvers. Over the period of the exercise, "the number of whale recordings dropped from over 200 to less than 50," *Nature* reported.

"Beaked whale species ... appear to cease vocalising and foraging for food in the area around active sonar transmissions," concluded a 2007 unpublished UK report, which referred to the study.

The report further noted, "Since these animals feed at depth, this could have the effect of preventing a beaked whale from feeding over the course of the trial and could lead to second or third order effects on the animal and population as a whole."

The report extrapolated that these second- and third-order effects could include starvation and then death.

Until now, sonar in the oceans has been

exclusively used for military purposes. This is about to change. There is a "sub-sea data network" being developed that would use sonar as a component of undersea Wi-Fi for mixed civilian and military use. Scientists from member nations of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), including, but not limited to Australia, China, the UK, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, are creating what is called the "Internet of Underwater Things," or IoUT. They are busy at the drawing board, designing data networks consisting of sonar and laser transmitters to be installed across vast undersea expanses. These transmitters would send sonar signals to a network of transponders on the ocean surface, which would then send 5G signals to satellites.

Utilized by both industry and military, the data network would saturate the ocean with sonar waves. This does not bode well for whale wellness or the climate. And yet, promoters are calling this development the "smart ocean."

The military is orchestrating a similar

overhaul on land and in space. Known as the Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), it would interface with the subsea sonar data network. It would require a grid of satellites that could control every coordinate on the planet and in the atmosphere, rendering a real-life, 3D chessboard, ready for high-tech battle.

In service to the JADC2, thousands more satellites are being launched into space. Reefs are being dredged and forests are being razed throughout Asia and the Pacific as an ambitious system of "mini-bases" is being erected on as many islands as possible—missile deployment stations, satellite launch pads, radar tracking stations, aircraft carrier ports, live-fire training areas and other facilities—all for satellite-controlled war. The system of mini-bases, in communication with the satellites, and with aircraft, ships and undersea submarines (via sonar), will be replacing the bulky brick-and-mortar bases of the 20th century.

Its data-storage cloud, called JEDI (Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure),

will be co-developed at a cost of tens of billions of dollars. The Pentagon has requested bids on the herculean project from companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Oracle and Google.

Viewed from a climate perspective, the Department of Defense is flagrantly barreling away from its stated mission, to "ensure our nation's security." The ongoing atrocities of the U.S. military against whales and marine ecosystems make a mockery of any of its climate initiatives.

While the slogan "Save the Whales" has been bandied about for decades, they're the ones actually saving us. In destroying them, we destroy ourselves.

*Originally published for Local Peace Economy/Independent Media Institute at CounterPunch*

*Koohan Paik-Mander, who grew up in postwar Korea and in the U.S. colony of Guam, is a Hawaii-based journalist and media educator. She is the co-author of The Superferry Chronicles: Hawaii's Uprising Against Militarism, Commercialism and the Desecration of the Earth.*



## RIMPAC

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firmed that military sonars are harmful to marine life and many militaries have adopted mitigating measures to protect wildlife. Whales and dolphins have been killed in U.S. military war exercises by sonar and bombs.

In March 2000, the U.S. Navy admitted that its use of a high-intensity sonar system caused 16 beaked and minke whales to be stranded on beaches in the Bahamas shortly after U.S. Navy ships using high-intensity sonar had passed by. Six of the whales died and autopsies on the mammals revealed bleeding around the whales' inner ears and in one instance in the brain.

Ten whales were pushed back into the sea but a decline in sightings of beaked whales led researchers working in the area to believe that many more may have died.

The Navy and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) launched a series of investigations with the interim synopsis of the reports concluding that the bleeding was caused by sound waves produced by the high-intensity sonar.

With almost twice as many military

ships (38) arriving in the Hawaiian waters than the Russian navy has in the Black Sea (20), the dangerous effects of the RIMPAC war maneuvers on dolphins, whales, and fishes will be substantial.

The effect of the RIMPAC military war exercises on international relations in the Pacific region may also have dangerous intended or unintended consequences that could put the region into ever increasing military confrontation instead of dialogue.

We need only look to the horrific loss of life and destruction of cities, farms and infrastructure in Ukraine to imagine what would happen should an incident, accidental or intentional, trigger military responses in Asia.

Major cities in Asia—Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo, Pyongyang and Moscow—could be targeted and destroyed by ballistic missiles from the United States and NATO.

In the United States, Honolulu; Hagatna, Guam; Washington, DC; New York; San Francisco; Los Angeles; San Diego; Seattle, or Houston could be targeted and destroyed by missiles from China, Russia and North Korea.

Cities in Europe—London, Paris, Rome, Madrid, Amsterdam—could be damaged or destroyed.

## No More Wars For 'Peace'

Military responses to perceived national security issues by any of the countries in the region whether it be North Korea, China, Russia or the United States will be disastrous for peoples over the entire planet.

We citizens must not let our governments continue confrontation instead of dialogue to resolve national security issues. The lives of people around the world are at stake. We must not let those who make money and political status out of war win ... AGAIN ... and start another

horrific war for "peace."

*Ann Wright is a 29-year U.S. Army/Army Reserves veteran who retired as a colonel and a former U.S. diplomat who resigned in March 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq. She served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, and Mongolia. In December 2001 she was on the small team that reopened the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. She is the co-author of the book Dissent: Voices of Conscience.*

## Monroe Doctrine

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for a negotiated agreement. During that bombing, Libyan writer Ahmad Ibrahim al-Faqih penned a lyrical poem, "*Nafaq Tudiuhu Imra Wahida*" ("A Tunnel Lit by a Woman"), in which he sang, "A time has passed, and another time has not come and will never come." Gloom defined the moment.

Today, we are in very dangerous times. And yet, the despondency of al-Faqih does not define our sensibility. The mood has altered. There is a belief in a world

beyond imperialism, a mood that is not only evident in countries such as Cuba and China, but equally in India and Japan, as well as among the hard-working people who would like our collective attention to be focused on the actual dilemmas of humanity and not on the ugliness of war and domination.

*Vijay Prashad is a Marxist historian and commentator. He is an executive-director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, the chief editor of Left-Word Books and a senior nonresident fellow at Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China.*

# Whales Could Save the Planet



## Unless the Military Destroys Them First

By Koohan Paik-Mander

The U.S. military is famous for being the single largest consumer of petroleum products in the world and the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Its carbon emissions exceed those released by “more than 100 countries combined.”

Now, with the Biden administration’s mandate to slash carbon emissions “at least in half by the end of the decade,” the Pentagon has committed to using all-electric vehicles and transitioning to bio-fuels for all its trucks, ships and aircraft. But is only addressing emissions enough to mitigate the current climate crisis?

What does not figure into the climate calculus of the new emission-halving plan is that the Pentagon can still continue to destroy Earth’s natural systems that help sequester carbon and generate oxygen. For example, the plan ignores the Pentagon’s continuing role in the annihilation of whales, in spite of the miraculous role that large cetaceans have played in delaying climate catastrophe and “maintaining healthy marine ecosystems,” according to a report by Whale and Dolphin Conservation. This fact has mostly gone unnoticed until only recently.

There are countless ways in which the Pentagon hobbles Earth’s inherent abilities to regenerate itself. Yet, it has been the decimation of populations of whales and dolphins over the last decade—resulting from the year-round, full-spectrum military practices carried out in the oceans—that has fast-tracked us toward a cataclysmic environmental tipping point.

The other imminent danger that whales and dolphins face is from the installation of space-war infrastructure, which is taking place currently. This new infrastructure comprises the development of the so-called “smart ocean,” rocket launchpads, missile tracking stations and other components of satellite-based battle. If the billions of dollars being plowed into the 2022 defense budget for space-war technology are any indication of what’s in store, the destruction to marine life caused by the use of these technologies will only accelerate in the future, hurtling Earth’s creatures to an even quicker demise than already forecast.

### Whale Health: The Easiest and Most Effective Way to Sequester Carbon

It’s first important to understand how whales are indispensable to mitigating climate catastrophe, and why reviving their numbers is crucial to slowing down damage and even repairing the marine ecosystem. The importance of whales in fighting the climate crisis has also been highlighted in an article that appeared in the International Monetary Fund’s Finance and Development magazine, which calls for the restoration of global whale populations. “Protecting whales could add significantly to carbon capture,” states the article, showing how the global financial institution also recognizes whale health to be one of the most economical and effective solutions to the climate crisis.

movements of the marine mammals as they dive to the depths to feed and then come up to the surface to breathe. This “whale pump” propels their own feces in giant plumes up to the surface of the water. This helps bring essential nutrients from the ocean depths to the surface areas where sunlight enables phytoplankton to flourish and reproduce, and where photosynthesis promotes the sequestration of carbon and the generation of oxygen. More than half the oxygen in the atmosphere comes from phytoplankton. Because of these infinitesimal marine organisms, our oceans truly are the lungs of the planet.

More whales mean more phytoplankton, which means more oxygen and more carbon capture. According to the authors of the article in the IMF’s Finance and

*There are countless ways in which the Pentagon hobbles Earth’s inherent abilities to regenerate itself. Yet, it has been the decimation of populations of whales and dolphins over the last decade ... that has fast-tracked us toward a cataclysmic environmental tipping point.*

Throughout their lives, whales enable the oceans to sequester a whopping 2 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide per year. That astonishing amount in a single year is nearly double the 1.2 billion metric tons of carbon that was emitted by the U.S. military in the entire 16-year span between 2001 and 2017, according to an article in Grist, which relied on a paper from the Costs of War Project at Brown University’s Watson Institute.

The profound role of whales in keeping the world alive is generally unrecognized. Much of how whales sequester carbon is due to their symbiotic relationship with phytoplankton, the organisms that are the base of all marine food chains.

The way the sequestering of carbon by whales works is through the piston-like

Development magazine—Ralph Chami and Sena Oztosun, from the IMF’s Institute for Capacity Development, and two professors, Thomas Cosimano from the University of Notre Dame and Connel Fullenkamp from Duke University—if the world could increase “phytoplankton productivity” via “whale activity” by only 1%, it “would capture hundreds of millions of tons of additional CO2 a year, equivalent to the sudden appearance of 2 billion mature trees.”

Even after death, whale carcasses function as carbon sinks. Every year, it is estimated that whale carcasses transport 190,000 tons of carbon, locked within their bodies, to the bottom of the sea. That’s the same amount of carbon produced by 80,000 cars per year, according

to Sri Lankan marine biologist Asha de Vos, who appeared on TED Radio Hour on NPR. On the seafloor, this carbon supports deep-sea ecosystems and is integrated into marine sediments.

### Vacuuming CO2 From the Sky: A False Solution

Meanwhile, giant concrete-and-metal “direct air carbon capture” plants are being planned by the private sector for construction in natural landscapes all over the world. The largest one began operation in 2021 in Iceland. The plant is named “Orca,” which not only happens to be a type of cetacean but is also derived from the Icelandic word for “energy” (orka).

Orca captures a mere 10 metric tons of CO2 per day—compared to about 5.5 million metric tons per day of that currently sequestered by our oceans, due, in large part, to whales. And yet, the minuscule comparative success by Orca is being celebrated, while the effectiveness of whales goes largely unnoticed. In fact, President Joe Biden’s \$1 trillion infrastructure bill contains \$3.5 billion for building four gigantic direct air capture facilities around the country. Nothing was allocated to protect and regenerate the real orcas of the sea.

If ever there were “superheroes” who could save us from the climate crisis, they would be the whales and the phytoplankton, not the direct air capture plants, and certainly not the U.S. military. Clearly, a key path forward toward a livable planet is to make whale and ocean conservation a top priority.

Unfortunately, the U.S. budget priorities never fail to put the Pentagon above all else—even a breathable atmosphere. At a December 2021 hearing on “How Operational Energy Can Help Us Address Logistics Challenges” by the Readiness Subcommittee of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee, Representative Austin Scott (R-GA) said, “I know we’re concerned about emissions and other things, and we should be. We can and should do a better job of taking care of the environment. But ultimately, when we’re in a fight, we have to win that fight.”

This logic that “we have to destroy the village in order to save it” prevails at the Pentagon. For example, hundreds of naval exercises conducted year-round in the Indo-Pacific region damage and kill tens of thousands of whales annually. And every year, the number of war games, encouraged by the U.S. Department of Defense, increases.

They’re called “war games,” but for creatures of the sea, it’s not a game at all.

Pentagon documents estimate that 13,744 whales and dolphins are legally allowed to be killed as “incidental takes” during any given year due to military exercises in the Gulf of Alaska.

In waters surrounding the Mariana Islands in the Pacific Ocean alone, the violence is more dire. More than 400,000 cetaceans comprising 26 species were allowed to have been sacrificed as “takes” during military practice between 2015 and 2020.

These are only two examples of a myr-

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