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Charting a Course of Resistance
Five decades of antiwar organizing from the RESIST Newsletter

By Nick Perricone and Christy Pardew

Covered in dust, we sorted through history last week: four decades of carefully-filed issues of the RESIST Newsletter in our office storage room. At once sobering and inspiring, the Newsletter archives paint an intriguing picture of the past 40 years. From Vietnam War draft resistance to the Black Panther Party, from the Freedom of Information Act to violence and US complicity in Central America, from AIDS activism to struggles in labor unions: the Newsletter archives serve as a chronicle of left organizing for the latter part of the twentieth century—and the first decades of the twenty-first.

With Obama’s recent declaration that the “tide of war is receding” in Afghanistan, military interventions were on our minds as we parsed through old Newsletter issues. We followed the thread of war and bombings from our very first issue throughout the collection. This is history we hope we can learn from.

When a group of antiwar organizers started RESIST in 1967, young men all over the country faced prosecution and possible jail time for their resistance to the Selective Service Act, which instituted the draft and forced them to fight in Vietnam. These men rejected their conscription into a war they felt to be unjust. At the same time countless more men and women across the United States organized and joined these draft resisters in solidarity, calling for an end to the war and for true justice for all. RESIST was born out of this sentiment.

To this day, as evidenced by our Newsletter collection, the US government has continued to engage in new wars—declared or not—and new lies. Yet the impulse to resist has not let up. Conscientious people continue to voice their objections to war and violence, choosing to stand instead for peace with justice. We offer the following excerpts, in part, to catch a glimpse of this hope and inspiration.

The United States has a long history with war. According to the historian William Blum, since World War II alone, the US has dropped bombs on no fewer than 19 different countries, spanning each corner of the globe.

In this issue, we plan to look back at RESIST’s origin in resistance to the war in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and to follow the subsequent series of bombings and interventions carried out by our government to the present day, dutifully covered in these pages along the way.

While mass draft resistance has become a thing of the past, its spirit remains alive as conscientious objectors and soldiers who refuse to deploy remind us that resistance to unjust wars is always relevant. In the following excerpts, selected from previous issues of the Newsletter, we hope to show the various manifestations of American hegemony—from full-scale war in Vietnam and southeast Asia to a more purely ostentatious display of might such as our war on Grenada; through covert episodes and maneuvers in Nicaragua and Guatemala, all the way to the present-day campaigns in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere.

For now, 44 years after RESIST’s founding, at a time when the president has announced that he needs no congressional approval to drop bombs on a foreign country, we hope this backward glance will prove to be both insightful and provocative to our readers.

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"Already our Next Vietnam?"

Doug McKay, March 1970

Not more than a month ago, newspapers around the country "discovered" US involvement in Laos. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee began to demand information on the extent of our military commitment in that country. "What strikes me most," Senator J. William Fulbright commented, "is that an operation of this size could be carried out without members of the Senate knowing it and without the public knowing...US involvement in Laos is anything but new. It may be traced to a foreign policy nearly twenty years old, a policy which also explains our involvements in Korea and Vietnam."

"Saying No"

Editorial, August-September 1982

Once upon a time the unthinkable became thinkable, and the previously unconceived of began to blind us to the horror of the familiar. It was the achievement of books like Jonathan Schell's Fate of the Earth to fill our heads with precise images for ultimate destruction: the firestorm, the blast wave, the reduction of ozone. Conventional war palled in comparison. In a way, June 12 was the culmination of our recognition, as hundreds of thousands marched to rid the world of our nightmares.

Then the summer came and not much was happening on the nuclear war front. The Administration and Congress were impressed by June 12 in spite of themselves. The nuclear freeze got some serious consideration. The defense appropriations bill passed with the MX and civil defense provisions intact. The nuclear freeze bill headed for defeat, at least for this year.

Meanwhile, Lebanon: the invasion, the bombing of Sidon and Tyre, and then the relentless shelling of Beirut, the ruthlessness of that violence, it seems obscene to condemn the conventional because it may lead to worse.

The reality of conventional war is terrible enough. The actions of a million young men in saying no to such horror should not need justifying, not to the government, not to the courts, and finally, not to the peace movement.

"The Draft"

Editorial, April 1982

About the time that schools and colleges are getting out for the summer, the Justice Department will begin selected prosecutions against those who failed to register for the draft. By that time their numbers will be officially estimated at about one million, and will actually be much higher. The government will have to bring a successful, highly-publicized case in each major television market.
their campaign is to have the desired effect of intimidating large numbers of young men to register. All indications to date are that prosecutions will be brought against those who have refused to register on principle, not those who have forgotten or were waiting to see if they got caught.

One would think that the peace movement would even now be preparing and positioning itself to launch a major peace initiative around the defense of non-registrants. Coming in the politically-sensitive pre-election period, and perhaps during the height of activities around the UN's Special Session on Disarmament, such a campaign would serve to make our commitment to peace specific, and to empower and encourage young people to stand up to the drift toward war. Because the draft will be necessary to fill the ranks of Reagan's expanded Rapid Deployment Force, moreover, agitation around the draft would make more problematic the ability of the US military to suppress liberation movements, and also to get us into the kind of confrontation with the Soviet Union that could lead to a superpower war.

Yet this support from the peace movement is not yet visible. After three years of anti-draft agitation, and with the still vivid memory of the effect of the anti-draft movement on the Vietnam war, the peace movement has yet to clearly commit itself to an active role against the draft. Indeed, the issue of the draft is not mentioned even among the many minor goals of the June 12th demonstration in New York. Why is this?

A disturbing possibility is that a substantial section of the peace movement is buying into the argument that the draft, and an increase in conventional forces generally, is necessary if we are to avoid relying on nuclear weapons and thus risking nuclear war.

We know there is no truth to this argument. Yet after years of benign neglect of the draft issue we need to raise our voices quickly and loudly against this view. We need to reassure the young people that we know that the struggle against war is indivisible, and that we won't let them be sacrificed for the illusory safety of the rest of us.

"Pacification in El Salvador"

Frank Brodhead
November/December 1983

The US government has initiated a significant escalation of the war in El Salvador. With the implementation of its pacification program in June 1983, the United States intends to break the military stalemate between the Salvadoran guerrillas and the armed forces. For despite significant inputs of US money, equipment, and training, the Salvadoran armed forces have been unable to defeat the insurgents, who now control approximately...
The US pacification strategy in El Salvador brings together three main elements:

- The use of military sweeps and intensive bombing to "clear and hold" guerrilla areas, creating zones from which guerrilla influence is eliminated;
- The implementation of an ambitious plan for "civic action," or economic rehabilitation, in areas which have been cleared of guerrillas. This involves using large amounts of AID funds to generate employment, repair roads, build clinics, reopen schools, and restore agricultural production. Consciously modeled on the Revolutionary Development programs used during the Vietnam War, the civic action component of the US pacification strategy breaches the tenuous barrier between "military" and "economic" aid to El Salvador.
- The training of thousands of Salvadoran troops in counter-insurgency tactics. The creation of a new training base in Honduras for Salvadoran troops and especially the training of junior officers are intended to create an army schooled in the lessons of Vietnam and willing to employ mobile counterinsurgency tactics to defeat the guerrillas. As part of the civic action program US advisers will also train villagers in pacified areas to function as a local militia, defending areas from guerrilla attack and reporting guerrilla movements to the regular army.

The strategic context

The United States has maintained the facade of a "two-track" policy toward Central America. One track has supposedly emphasized a political or negotiated settlement. Elements of this strategy have included the attempt to draw opposition "moderates" into the Salvadoran electoral process, the "search for peace" conducted by Regan's special envoy Richard Stone, and the bipartisan Kissinger commission on Central America. The mass media have identified the "negotiations track" with the State Department, and particularly with State Department officials like Thomas Enders and Deane Hinton. The recent demotion of these two officials, and the general subordination of Central America policy to the National Security Council, indicates that the negotiations track has lost favor in the Reagan administration, and that its remaining elements, like the Salvadoran elections scheduled for 1984, are public relations devices.

The real weight of US policy in Central America rests with the "military track." This is most evident in a September 1983 speech given by Undersecretary of Defense Fred C. Ikle, advocating military victory and denying that Nicaragua has the right of self-determination; but it is rooted in longstanding US policy toward the region. Over the last century the United States has not hesitated to intervene militarily in Central America; and the US military has played a decisive role in shaping modern El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala. But the United States regards Central America as a vital but secondary theater of operations, and fears that the region's conflicts will divert resources needed in the more vital areas of Europe, the Middle East, or Southwest Asia.

"Plotting the Destruction of Nicaragua"

Jeanne Gallo
August/September 1983

Recently, Jeanne Gallo, a Sister of Notre Dame and a human rights activist in Boston, returned from a five-week trip to Nicaragua. While traveling through the war zone she spoke with hundreds of Nicaraguans, including Sandinista leaders. In this article she describes the effects of the US-sponsored war on the people and she reveals the Reagan administration's objectives in the region.

War is a horrible thing. And at this moment, the United States government is waging war against the Nicaraguan people. The effects of US aggression are tremendous on this small Central American country of two and a half million people. For close to half a century, Nicaragua was kept in a state of extreme under-development by the hereditary dictatorship of the Somoza family which was installed, armed, and protected by the United States. The Somoza dynasty came to embody the essence of imperial
power, scheming, corrupting, buying, selling, terrorizing, plundering.

By the time of the most recent Somoza, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the family controlled a large part of the Nicaraguan economy: nearly 30% of the arable land, the national airline, the only shipping company, the extensive interests in banking, hotels, real estate, fishing, construction, radio, television, and newspapers.

During the last years of the regime, the corruption rampant throughout the Somoza administration pushed the Nicaraguan people to the limit. As opposition to Somoza developed and the influence of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) grew, Somoza became even more repressive and his National Guard unleashed a reign of terror.

This was aimed at the peasant population particularly, who at the time were the FSLN's base of support. Whole areas were burned out, driving thousands of peasants off their land in order to create "free fire" zones in which the FSLN guerrillas would be unable to survive. There is no exact data as to how many people were tortured, imprisoned or murdered at this time.

Then it ended. It ended with a massive and total insurrection by the people of Nicaragua which began in the last days of May and culminated on July 19, 1979, when the FSLN marched triumphantly into Managua and installed a new government.

Today, as it struggles to heal its war wounds, to build a revolution, to rebuild a country that's been ravaged not only by a war but also by an earthquake, by provoked shortages, by economic destabilization, and now by a blockade, Nicaragua is forced to use precious resources for self-defense against a US backed "not-so-secret" covert war.

The feeling in Nicaragua today as it fights counter-revolutionaries or "contras" on both its northern and southern borders, as it is surrounded by US warships loaded with planes, bombs, tanks and troops, on both its Atlantic and Pacific coasts, is one of tension, one of fear, of waiting, of wondering when, not if, the US bombs will be unleashed, blasting them "back to the stone age."

But, as one religious worker told me this past month in Managua: "It doesn't make any difference how many bombs or how many people are killed. This struggle of the poor will keep on going. It cannot be stopped. I know that's the way thousands of Nicaraguans look at it. Their mission is to plant the seed and for others to continue."

"US invades Grenada"

Editorial
November/December 1983

The hypocrisy and contradictions involved in the recent invasion of Grenada are blatant. Reagan couldn't have given us a clearer mandate to mobilize. This administration's attempt to beat the "Vietnam syndrome" calls us to demonstrate that we will not forget the lessons of Vietnam. Our movement grew out of the struggle to end the war in Vietnam. That war is our legacy as Louis Kampflustrates in "Sixteen Years of Resistance" in this newsletter. With 500,000 US troops presently stationed around the globe, the kind of work Resist has supported since 1967 is needed as much, or more, than ever.

"The Reality of Grenada"

Jaenne Gallo, February 1984

The question for us here in the US is how to take that anger that so many of us felt, especially after the invasion of Grenada, and turn it into energy, into the commitment needed in the struggle to create a more human world....

What is new is the moment, for us and for Latin America. Grenada has had a profound effect. There is a new awareness that change for Latin America depends upon the people of the United States. This is also not a new statement, but the way in which it is being said is new.

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The revolutionary struggles for liberation continue. The people of Latin America are conscious. The people of El Salvador, of Guatemala, of Nicaragua, are awake. But, the giant to the North can crush them and do so because its people are asleep, or if not asleep, impervious to the cries of the poor, deaf to the cries of their brothers and sisters to the South for peace, for justice, for liberation.

How to unblock these deaf ears? How to give sight to blind North Americans so that they can see the other” not as an enemy but as one who is like them. For many years I had believed that if people but heard, they would act. But now I know that is not true. It is not so easy, especially when “hearts and minds” of US citizens can be won so readily through the control and manipulation of the media as was experienced during the Grenada invasion. Other things have to happen and much of it on an ideological level.

“The objective of imperialism and of the regimes that cooperate with imperialism inside our countries is to convince people that peace and security are based on war. That is the way they will control any situation in any country. There is no country so small that it cannot be helped by war. There is no person, no village, that is not important to them.”

Ronald Reagan when giving his reasons for the invasion of Grenada stated: “...We are a nation with global responsibilities, we're not somewhere elses' interests. We're there protecting our own” (New York Times, 10/28/83).

It is in this context that we must view the invasion of the tiny island of Grenada. In this kind of worldview, no place is considered small.

"A Matter of Conscience: Resistance Within the US Military in Vietnam"

Bill Short and Willa Seidenberg, March 1988

In recent years there has been a plethora of books, articles, television documentaries and movies about the Vietnam War and its veterans, much of it coming from veterans themselves. But one voice has not yet been heard from: the men and women in the United States military who resisted a war they came to see as morally wrong.

Dissent within the military during the Vietnam War is unprecedented. According to Defense Department figures, as many as 503,926 incidents of desertion occurred between July 1, 1966 and December 31, 1973; compared with 191,840 reported cases of men refusing draft induction between 1963 and 1973. Desertion, AWOL, disciplinary infractions, refusing orders, fraggings and sabotages were all expressions of protest for servicemen and women. Often they risked court-martial, imprisonment and ostracization from their family and friends. Along with civilian peers, GIs developed their own counter-culture, spawning a GI movement complete with demonstrations, coffeehouses and newspapers; all a way of rebelling against the authoritarian control of a military ready to sacrifice their lives for a cause GIs didn’t understand.

Growing up in the shadow of World War II, on a steady diet of John Wayne movies, these veterans’ acts of dissent and protest often ran counter to the values they learned as children. The obligation to defend God and country seemed an inevitable task. The military demanded blind trust and soldiers were expected to obey, right or wrong. But at the same time, they entered the military with a set of moral values that often did not conform to the duties they were expected to carry out as soldiers. Their courage to listen to their consciences serve as a lesson to future generations, particularly tomorrow’s soldiers who may one day be faced with their own Vietnam, and the decision between right and wrong.
On the following pages are the faces and stories of some of these veterans. They are part of a project called "A Matter of Conscience: Resistance Within the U.S. Military During the Vietnam War," a series of portraits and oral histories of resistance vets. Like all veterans of the Vietnam War, protest vets have deep internal wounds, and feelings of confusion, self-doubt and isolation. These veterans not only feel alienated from the community at large, but also from other veterans who might resent the stands they took. We hope this project will give them a forum to finally talk about their experiences...

**Jim Packer’s oral history**
When they invaded Cambodia it was just horrendous. I was in Washington DC at the time; a career marine officer going to school to learn how to do underwater maps and charts for landings all over the world. I was outraged the invasion had taken place. It made me realize the stupid thing was far from ending. I read about some Navy officers who were speaking out against the war and I tracked them down. I was so happy to find these guys because I thought I was alone; you feel so isolated when you’re in the military. There were about ten or twelve of us in the beginning. We got together another six or seven joined in the next week, and the Concerned Officers Movement was born. We didn’t do anything really to organize; it was more like a rap group. It was more like, wow, we’d found each other. It was just good to talk about what the hell was happening, how the war sucked and what we could do about it. The next thing we knew people all over the country were calling us asking how they could start a chapter, the thing just sort of organized itself. We soon had hundreds of officers from all branches of the services, all over the country involved. We were perceived as a real danger, because as officers we were the command structure and many of us had high security access. We didn’t think we were doing anything wrong; we figured that’s what we fought in Vietnam for, our constitutional rights. Our right to speak our mind. Everybody identified with the Concerned Officer Movement had funny things start happening to them; you’d be transferred, you’d be offered an early discharge, or suddenly your fitness report would go from excellent to unsatisfactory. The reaction from the Marine Corp was so out of line that I would have to say the Corp radicalized me more than the demonstrators out on the streets did.

"The Gulf Crisis: Unasked Questions on the US in the Middle East"

Irene Gendzier
November 1990
A political earthquake is in the making in the Persian Gulf. Whatever the outcome, and the options are few, it is safe to say that the Middle East will not be the same. This is not a lament, but a reflection on the dimensions of a crisis as complex as it is divisive and dangerous for the peoples of the region. From the initial invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, to the response it evoked in the US and the West, the multiplicity of issues involved is staggering, the stakes are high, the conflicts deep and the potential for massive destruction evident. Everywhere there is fear, uncertainty, and a deep disquiet about what tomorrow will bring.

In the Middle East, the crisis has exposed the disparate, desperate, and contradictory nature of Arab state politics. Simmering beneath the frantic movements are deeply rooted divisions of states, searing class conflicts, the frustrations of dealing with repressive regimes, and pervasive despair generated by unresolved conflicts in the region. This explosive combination of factors was not created by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The alienation, anger and despair were everywhere to be seen prior to Iraq’s recent aggression. But the mobilization by the US of a vast military armada stationed in Saudi Arabia has—far more than the reaction of the USSR or the United Nations—catapulted Arab regimes out of their habitual alliances, and alerted them to the dangers from below, from the ready anger of their own masses....

The agenda on the Middle East, freed of such restrictions, must include one fundamental question: what are US interests in the Gulf and the Middle East? How is it that some former Reagan administration officials contest that this is an area necessary for the “national security” while this administration says the reverse? Why has no congressional voice been raised to question exactly what the administration means when its officials
talk of an extended stay in the Gulf? And what of oil companies, and their exceptionally low profile? And what of arms, and specifically, the contribution of the US and most of the other states aligned against Iraq, to the escalation of the arms race in the Middle East?

"US/Iraq War: New Order 'In a World Gone Mad'"

Joseph Gerson, November 1990

The US preparation for war against Iraq is drawing to a close. The United States has assembled more than 200,000 troops, an aerial armada, and a naval flotilla in Saudi Arabia, other Gulf states, Turkey, the Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea. President Bush has staked his political future on Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait, even as his administration is opposing Iraqi, Arab and French diplomatic efforts to provide Hussein a face-saving way to leave Iraq. Time is running out. In the words of Senator Kennedy: "The President is heading for war perhaps next week, perhaps next month, but almost certainly by the end of the year."

With the new year will come sand storms and then intense desert heat—two more reasons that war is likely to be launched sooner rather than later.

This will not be a replay of Panama or Grenada. The toll is likely to be thousands of US lives, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi and Kuwaiti lives, the devastation of the land, and the disappearance of whatever shred of respect lingers for the US in the Middle East.

The 1980s provided dress rehearsals for this war: The Iraq/Iran war, and US military intervention on Iraq's behalf; the invasions of Grenada and Panama; hostages and US Marines in Lebanon; economic embargoes against Nicaragua, Vietnam and Cambodia; the budget battle and the battle for "burden-sharing"; war games in Egypt and the construction of US bases in Saudi sands and in nations surrounding the Gulf. The rehearsals are over and the struggle is now on to shape the contours of the post-Cold War era.

Would that issues were simple, either/or, black and white. Saddam Hussein has long been among the world's most vicious dictators. The pillage of Kuwait and the terrorization of its people are but the (il)logical extension of his brutal rule. The Iraqi conquest of Kuwait can only be condemned and resisted. But, as UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar repeated, the US exceeded the Security Council's mandate by unilaterally deploying military forces and establishing a blockade—an act of war—against Iraq. As King Hussein of Jordan desperately observed, the US deployments have made the confrontation far more dangerous, a "crisis in a world gone mad." The UN called for sanctions and an embargo, not war. The Soviet Union has thus far refused to give the US a UN flag and a carte blanche for a war the UN cannot control.

There is cruel irony in that the US reconquered Panama just last December, and secret mass graves of Panamanian civilian victims of that war are just not being discovered. Moreover, the US's allies in the Gulf confrontation include Turkey, which has occupied portions of Cyprus for 16 years; Morocco, which has occupied the Spanish Sahara since the fall of Franco; Syria with its 40,000 troops in Lebanon; and of course, Israel which has militarily occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for 23 years and which has annexed the occupied Golan Heights and Palestinian East Jerusalem.

"Warring with the Coverage of War: Dissent Disappears from Media Coverage"

Danny Schecter, December 2001

We have all been here before. Watching our country go to war, with the mainstream media enlisted as a megaphone for official views and sanitized news. It was like that in Vietnam, in the Gulf, and now, with a significant difference, in Afghanistan. The difference is that today—despite new technologies, hundreds of new channels and the diverse views available through the internet—the situation is worse.

Worse, in part because journalists have effectively been barred from the battlefields, and because most media institutions have confused jingoism with journalism. American flags fly in the lapels of newscasters and in the graphics on news sets, masking their uncritical analyses in patriotic symbols. The voices of dissent are mostly absent, as the New York Times discovered almost two months continued on page 9
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after the war began.

A Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) survey of the New York Times and Washington Post op-ed pages for the three weeks following the attacks (9/12/01-10/2/01) found that "columns calling for or assuming a military response to the attacks were given a great deal of space, while opinions urging diplomatic and international law approaches as an alternative to military action were nearly non-existent. A total of 44 columns in the Times and Post clearly stressed a military response, against only two columns stressing non-military solutions."

In addition, both op-ed pages showed a striking gender imbalance. Of the 107 op-ed writers at the Post, only seven were women. Proportionally, the Times did slightly better, with eight female writers out of 79. This is especially ironic in a war against a Taliban condemned for its treatment of women....

Marriage of media and military
Understand at the outset that TV news thrives on the excitement, challenge and budges that accompany the coverage of war. I wrote about this media context in the Electronpress.com edition of my book News Dissector. While war unleashes devastation and death on people, it delivers ratings and brings life to television. War is often the "big story" (when sex isn't), a defining moment for many journalists. It's the story that permits news departments to mobilize their "troops"—that's what ABC called employees when I worked there—and show off their hi-tech deployments. Many reporters who "make it" to the top do so because of war reporting. Ask Peter Arnett, Cristianne Amanpour or even Peter Jennings—no disrespect intended—if being under fire helped or hurt their careers. The answer is obvious. Less obvious is the relationship between our bloated defense budget and war coverage. The Pentagon manipulates TV's military boosterism to hype adventures, secure appropriations and sell weaponry.

"Why We Resist in a Time of War"

Henry Rosemont, Jr and Carol Schachet, January/February 2006

As the number of US dead and wounded in Iraq swell past 15,000 (the overwhelming majority of them military) with the Iraqi count eight times as large (the overwhelming majority of them civilians), the majority of Americans are beginning to question the invasion, occupation, and ongoing slaughter taking place in their name....

In a speech just after the Iraqi election, President Bush accepted "responsibility" for the invasion based on "faulty evidence," an altogether throwaway line (unless accompanied by a resignation). His admission of culpability was interjected in the midst of a succession of other speeches with but one message: We shall not give an inch; we shall "stay the course."

Where is the outrage?

Given these horrors, the intransigence of those responsible for them, and only rhetorical answers being given to justify our purpose(s) for being in Iraq, why are not more US citizens demonstrating in the streets, writing or phoning their representatives local and federal, and/or engaging in the time-honored tradition of civil disobedience to bring a half to the war? There are several answers to this question, all of which progressive activists must continue to address in their political and organizing work.

The first reason why protest has been muted thus far is because the great majority of the US population has suffered not a whit because of this war being waged in their name. Bush has thus far been able to pursue a "guns and butter" economic policy while prosecuting the war: there is no conscription; no food or gas rationing; no energy cutbacks, no tax increases, nothing. Indeed, a new, fourth round of tax cuts for the rich is now before the Congress....

Of course, there is a major exception to the generalization that the US has not suffered because of the war: namely, the continued on page 10

Iraqi labor leaders join hands with local Milwaukee labor leaders in 2009.
military themselves, their families and their friends. But the deepest and most long-range suffering of the US troops is not due to the constant threat of death, but rather to what few wish to confront directly—the dehumanization that attends the regular infliction of pain, death and destruction on others who are not clearly distinguishable as friend or foe.

Evidence is mounting daily that many of the inhumane horrors descriptive of the worst excesses of the US during the Vietnam War are being repeated, and intensified, in Iraq. Many civilians die daily, not all of them killed by insurgent bombs. Our soldiers are machine-gunning residents who may all-too-quickly seem to be insurgents, but upon later investigation, turn out to have been workers confused about where, when, and how best to show themselves at checkpoints. Others young and old, male and female, are shot in cars which approach occupation convoys too closely. Torture extends far beyond a “few bad apples” and is not even confined to obtaining intelligence, but at times simply to “let off steam,” according to one account. The atmosphere in which they live and fight makes it commonplace to belittle, if not altogether detest, the people they are supposedly fighting for, and to make light of the ancient culture these people have inherited.

The psychological and psychic damage being done to the US military forces in Iraq (and Afghanistan) may, in the end, be the most costly part of the war for American society to bear, damage all the more destructive for being suffered to no purpose. Hence there is a strong desire to insist that the war did and does serve a purpose, which is not possible if the troops are withdrawn quickly.

Resistant and opposition mount

Despite these obstacles, opposition to the war is growing, particularly on moral rather than pragmatic grounds. In the military, a number of soldiers are refusing to fight, or be shipped to Iraq, or are applying for Conscientious Objector status—all on principled ethical bases.

RESIST stands ready to assist these movements and others as well, not only for peace but for social justice both at home and abroad. A grant to the San Diego Military Counseling Project provided assistance to military service members who refuse war-related assignments and seek discharge. RESIST also funded several groups to counter military recruitment efforts, including Alternatives to the Military Project (Lincoln, Nebraska) and the Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities (Encinitas, California). With help from RESIST, many local community peace and justice centers, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Bangor, Maine, have played important roles in bringing accurate information and a spirit of resistance to their communities.

"Whose Peace? Our Peace: War and occupations continue under Obama; resistance grows at home"

Clare Moen, July/August 2009

Sadly, we have passed the 5,000 mark on troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, refugees and internally displaced persons. To date, over $830 billion have been allocated to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. And in late June, Obama signed into law a measure containing $79.9 billion to further fund these wars through September 30.

The wars are taking their toll on US soldiers in myriad other ways as well, including post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, failed relationships and suicide. The mental health screening, studies and increased psychiatric staff the Army is scrambling to provide have mostly been too little, too late. The suicide rate for the military has surpassed the civilian rate, and military psychiatrists are doing little more than prescribing pills. Until recently, the Army has been blaming the suicides on the soldiers themselves rather than lengthy, repeated deployments into a
violent, unpopular war. As the peace movement has been saying since before Obama’s election, we cannot sit back and wait for any president to end these wars. A powerful, grassroots movement is the only change we can truly believe in, and that movement continues to grow even among worries that Obama’s election has left activists complacent.

Resistance grows
Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are resisting and organizing in amazing and creative ways that pay tribute to their predecessors during the Vietnam War. GI coffee houses inspired by the Vietnam-era movement are springing up near bases around the country, like Coffee Strong in Fort Lewis, Washington, or Under the Hood in Killeen, Texas. These are spaces where veterans and soldiers can meet to support one another and exchange experiences, screen films like David Seiger’s Sir! No Sir!, offer GI rights counseling and hold meetings. Groups like Citizen Soldier, Iraq Veterans against the War and Veterans for Peace are active in these spaces, offering resources to conscientious objectors and war resisters who have seen first-hand the crime and brutality that is all war. Where the GI peace movement seeks to starve the Pentagon of the people power to fight wars, others who work for peace are looking to remove its funding. United for Peace and Justice, a national coalition of antiwar groups, is calling for Congress to cut military spending by 25% by 2010. War tax resisters are refusing to pay all or part of the 51% of their taxes budgeted for current and past military. In addition, the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee continues their campaign to encourage a boycott of war taxes throughout the country.

Other groups are working on antiwar profiteering campaigns promoting divestment, brand busting and direct action to cut off financial support of the military-industrial complex. Bite the Bullet! is a network of organizations that focuses on the ways in which universities, the government, weapons makers, the media, corporations, and more are all heavily invested in and supported by the war machine. Through investigation and hard work, many individuals and organizations are working to stop the flow of indirect support of the military.

Not only adults and organizations are refusing to be complacent under the new Democratic administration. Students of all ages are at the forefront of the peace movement. As the military focuses more heavily on high school recruitment, young people and adults are combining their efforts to keep recruiters out of schools and to train youth to organize for peace.... BAY-Peace (Better Alternatives for Youth), a RESIST grantee, is a California-based group that fights back against aggressive military recruiting in high schools. Meanwhile, university students have been occupying buildings on campuses from New York City to Edinburgh calling for aid to Gaza, scholarships for Palestinians, divestment from Israel’s military and more.

Support grassroots social justice organizing today.
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RESIST awards grants six times a year to groups throughout the United States engaged in organizing for social, economic and environmental justice. Below we list a few grant recipients from our most recent allocation cycle in June of 2011, the third cycle with our new maximum grant award of $4,000. For more information, visit the RESIST website at www.resistinc.org or contact these groups directly.

Defense Depot Memphis Tennessee – Concerned Citizens Committee
1000 South Cooper, Suite 237, Memphis, Tennessee 38104, www.ddmtccc.org

Founded in 1995 to stand up against toxic contamination coming from the nearby Memphis Defense Depot, the Concerned Citizens’ Committee works both to spread awareness about and to end environmental injustice. In collaboration with a local youth group, they work against pollution through public education and direct action.

RESIST’s grant of $3,000 will help Defense Depot Concerned Citizens Committee continue to work for environmental justice in communities contaminated by military waste.

Trans Youth Support Network
PO Box 7625, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55407
www.transyouthsupportnetwork.org

The Trans Youth Support Network formed in response to the hostile environment toward young transgender people, especially trans women of color. Offering young people who are gender non-conforming a safe space for support and community-building, they work to ensure that people who are transgender are given the resources they need.

RESIST’s $3,000 grant will allow Trans Youth Support Network to continue to use community gatherings and support as a first step in youth organizing.

Civilian-Soldier Alliance
2638 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218, www.civsol.org

The Civilian-Soldier Alliance enables members of the military to engage with one another and with civilians to transform US foreign policy and military culture. Through music, outreach and organizing, they empower those who resist to do so effectively and in solidarity.

RESIST’s “Hell Yes!” grant of $4,000 will help the alliance continue to work with veterans and active-duty service members to build a GI resistance movement towards a just foreign policy.

Sand Mountain Concerned Citizens
PO Box 428, Ider, Alabama 35765

The Sand Mountain Concerned Citizens came together in 1999 to challenge corporate agriculture’s destabilization of rural communities and pollution of the rural countryside by corporate hog farms of immense size. They work to force changes to corporate agribusiness’s harming of rural communities by dumping their waste nearby.

A $4,000 “Hell Yes!” grant to the organization will help them continue to organize against the growth of the corporate swine industry in densely populated rural areas of Alabama and its surrounding states.