

Voices for Creative Nonviolence

1249 W. Argyle St.
Chicago, IL 60640
773-878-3815
email: info@vcnv.org
web: www.vcnv.org

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Dear Friends,

Voices launched "the Occupation Project" on February 5th, 2007. In the weeks that followed, daily updates from groups across the U.S. described dynamic local campaigns to end funding for war in Iraq. In 33 states, activists are sustaining campaigns of civil disobedience in the offices of Representatives and Senators, seeking their pledge to vote against the nearly \$100 billion supplemental spending bill for war in Iraq. As of March 10, 160 people have been arrested for occupying these offices, with 20 days left in this phase of the campaign.

Consequences of the U.S. "war of choice" are borne by hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq, who are ravaged by death, destruction, displacement and chaos. Iraqis who flee to Jordan and Syria face precarious conditions amid populations already strained by poverty, unemployment and scarce resources. Reports of inadequate care for Iraq war veterans stir shame and alarm in the U.S. A list of grievances caused by U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan must also include "the tradeoff," -- pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into warfare in Iraq requires cutbacks in crucially needed domestic social programs. Here in Chicago, drastic layoffs and closures at medical facilities will radically reduce health care delivery to many people, including Iraq war veterans.

"We saw what happened to your own people after Hurricane Katrina," commented an Iraqi man who recently fled to Jordan. "Truthfully, because of what we saw, we don't expect much help from your country."

We believe that people in the U.S. bear a great responsibility to help Iraqis reconstruct their war-torn country. We should also work to end any expectations

that Iraq repay odious debts incurred by Saddam Hussein's regime. As we continue calling for an end to Iraq war funding, we also demand that funds proposed for military expenditure be directed, instead, toward reconstruction in Iraq. Such funds should not be entrusted to the U.S. military or to U.S. military contractors.

These considerations prompted several "next steps" in the Occupation Project. We welcome your participation in the following initiatives.

i — "For the Love of Peace, a Fast to End Military and Economic Warfare Against Iraq." Beginning April 9th, and for the following three weeks, join Voices for Creative Nonviolence in daily fasting and vigils in Chicago's federal building plaza or in your own locale.

ii — On April 16th, "tax day," consider cutting military spending from your own personal budget (see National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, www.nwtrcc.org for more information)

iii — Also on April 16th, organize civil disobedience in your Representative or Senator's office, urging legislators to vote against the 100 billion dollar supplemental bill for the Iraq war this year and the 142 billion dollars proposed for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan next fiscal year.

The Occupation Project Update

A Campaign of Sustained Nonviolent Civil Disobedience to End the Iraq War

www.vcnv.org

occupationproject@vcnv.org

773-878-3815



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Included in this newsletter are articles which we hope will be useful for your local outreach and organizing. For information about ongoing campaign actions, please stay in touch with us, through the website, www.vcnv.org or through calls (773-878-3815) and email, info@vcnv.org. We're intensely grateful to the many people whose encouragement, participation and generosity have helped us maintain Voices for Creative Nonviolence efforts.

03/10/07 - Scott Blackburn, Joel Gullede, Laurie Hasbrook, Jeff Leys, Kathy Kelly, Gerald Paoli, Dan Pearson



The Occupation Project: Continuing the Struggle to End Iraq War Funding

From February 5th to March 10th, over 160 people have been arrested nationwide in the Occupation Project campaign to end Iraq war funding. This campaign of sustained civil disobedience concludes at the end of March, with many more arrests expected in the final 20 days of the campaign.

What to do now?

APRIL 2nd – APRIL 15th: Congress is in recess. Visit your Representative's and Senators' offices to tell them to vote against any additional funds for the Iraq war. It is quite likely that the House and the Senate will have passed their own different supplemental spending bills to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. During April, a conference committee of the House and Senate will come up with a final version of the bill, which will be voted on by both the House and Senate.

Use the month of April to call your elected officials

to tell them to vote against the supplemental spending bill and any additional war funds. Call the Congressional switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to their office. Toll free number: 866-340-9281

APRIL 9th – APRIL 30th: "For the Love of Peace: A Fast to End Economic and Military Warfare Against Iraq." A 21 day (minimum) liquids only fast in Chicago, with a focus upon Senators Durbin and Obama. We seek:

- 1) an end to Iraq war funding;
- 2) the payment of war reparations by the U.S. to Iraq so that Iraqis may rebuild their country;
- 3) an unconditional cancellation of the "odious debt" incurred by Saddam Hussein's regime and of the war reparations charges imposed against Iraq following Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait;
- 4) significant efforts to assist Iraqis displaced by war through: a) allocation of U.S. funds to UN agencies and NGOs attempting to assist Iraqis who have fled Iraq and to deal with the humanitarian catastrophe within Iraq; b) assistance to Jordan and Syria, two countries that have absorbed close to two million Iraqis who have fled Iraq; c) easing of the visa requirements for Iraqis to enter the U.S.

APRIL 16th: Civil disobedience to end funding of the Iraq war. Join in coordinated acts of civil disobedience that will occur across the country this day—Tax Day—to demand that Representatives and Senators vote against any additional funding for the Iraq war.

MAY 1 and after: We encourage you to organize weekly visits to your Representative's and Senators' offices to demand that they vote against any additional Iraq war funding. Another \$142 billion attached to the regular Defense Department appropriations bill to fund the war from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008. Use the Sacramento, California model of respectfully sitting in at your elected official's office from the time it opens to the time it closes, using the power of moral persuasion to bring about change. Prepare for civil disobedience in the future by engaging in nonviolent training workshops and forming affinity groups. As the calendar becomes more clear for the vote on the \$142 billion we expect to be organizing civil disobedience on a nationwide scale once again.

Progress is being made to end the Iraq war. The House leadership is including provisions in the supplemental spending bill to, hopefully, bring about the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq by September 8, 2008. Whether these provisions will be included in the final version of the supplemental spending bill that gets put on the President's desk is anyone's guess right now. But we have seen progress—it is fitful progress, slow and halting... not nearly enough and not quickly enough.

Let us not delude ourselves into believing that this very limited progress means we get to rest on our laurels and celebrate. Quite the contrary. Now is the time to push harder than ever for a complete cessation of funds for the Iraq war, other than those required to effect an immediate withdrawal of U.S. military forces. Over 100 Iraqis are killed every day—a low estimate, since it only includes those for whom death certificates are issued. If the U.S. does not withdraw until September 8, 2008, well over 50,000 more Iraqis will be killed before the withdrawal is completed.

The time is now to exercise all nonviolent means—fasts, vigils, legal lobbying, sit-ins, civil disobedience—to bring about an end to the Iraq war.



A Brief Primer on the 2007 Iraq War Funding Request

(For a more in-depth analysis of the supplemental spending request, please visit the Voices website and read "Money for Nothing: Iraq War Funding" by Jeff Leys or call us at 773-878-3815 for a copy)

President Bush requested \$93 billion in additional war funding. Congress is modifying this, with the cost increasing daily. The following discussion is based upon the President's initial request submitted on February 5.

There are three major categories of spending within the supplemental spending request: Personnel costs; Procurement costs; and Operations and Maintenance costs.

Personnel costs have remained relatively stable from 2004 through 2007. In 2004, \$17.8 billion was spent on personnel costs. This year, with passage of the supplemental, personnel costs will be \$17.5 billion. The consistency of personnel costs should be kept in mind when considering the rapid increase in other costs of the Iraq war. If troop levels have remained relatively consistent from 2004 to 2007, why is there an exponential growth in other areas of prosecuting the wars?

Operations and Maintenance (O & M) is the area in which war costs have grown exponentially. In 2004, the U.S. spent \$37.2 billion for Operations & Maintenance costs. This year, with passage of the supplemental spending bill, O & M costs will come to \$77 billion—more than double what was spent in 2004. If troop levels are relatively consistent over the past 3 years, then why is there a \$40 billion increase in O&M costs over the 2004 budget and a \$19 billion increase over last year's costs?

The answer to this question is that nobody really knows the answer. It's a question that has been asked over

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Iraq War Funding Request continued...

the past year by the Congressional Research Service (May 2006), by the Government Accountability Office (November 2006) and by the Congressional Budget Office (January 2007). Each agency came to the conclusion that it is impossible to determine the purposes for which the Operations & Maintenance budget is being used. 25 percent of the funds spent for O & M are categorized by the Department of Defense as being for “miscellaneous” or “other” purposes.

Indeed, the Department of Defense is not required to submit detailed justification materials to explain why it is requesting such significant funds for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars when it submits a supplemental spending request. These justification materials are required when it submits its regular annual appropriations budget request.

Procurement is the final major ticket item in the supplemental spending bill. This is the portion that is used to buy new weapons, new ammunition, new vehicles, etc. The funds are available for use for up to three years into the future. It takes anywhere from 1 to 3 years for new items to be available to troops in the field after the money has been appropriated by Congress. This is the normal procurement cycle, as stated by General Peter Schoomaker in testimony before the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee in early February. So money spent on procurement is not money spent on weapons or vehicles that will be immediately available to troops in Iraq today.

Yet procurement spending will take a gigantic leap if the supplemental spending bill is passed. If it follows President Bush’s request, spending on procurement will top \$44 billion for this year alone. That compares to the \$47 billion spent on procurement for 2004, 2005 and 2006—combined!

So now to unravel the argument that U.S. soldiers will somehow be left out in the cold and endangered if the

supplemental spending bill is not passed.

First, the Defense Department already has budgetary authority to transfer or reprogram funds within the regular defense budget to ensure the safe and orderly withdrawal of U.S. soldiers from Iraq.

Second, the military has not presented any substantive justification materials to demonstrate why the costs of Operations and Maintenance have more than doubled since 2004. We, and Congress, are asked to take the military at its word.

Third, General Peter Pace and General Peter Schoomaker have both testified to Congress that U.S. soldiers that deploy to Iraq have the proper equipment upon deployment. General Pace told the Senate Appropriations Committee that each soldier who leaves a military base on patrol in Iraq is in a vehicle with Level 1 armored protection. General Peter Schoomaker told the House Appropriations Committee that when Unit A deploys to Iraq it has all the equipment it requires for deployment to Iraq. He stated that the problem is that Unit A borrows equipment from Unit B, which remains at its home base in the U.S. Both Generals though confirm in testimony that units deployed to Iraq have proper equipment.

Fourth, the weapons systems; vehicles equipped with more advanced armored plating; and other forms of equipment which are being funded by the procurement process won’t be available to U.S. troops in the field for 1 to 3 years into the future. General Schoomaker gave the example of it taking 18 months to acquire a transmission to place into a vehicle.

Fifth, the very simple answer is that the way to ensure the safety of U.S. soldiers is to withdraw them—each and every one—from Iraq and back to the safety of their home base in the U.S.



Picking up the Pieces

By Cathy Breen

March 7th, 2007

Amman, Jordan

After a brief visit to the Iraq embassy this morning, I made my way by foot to the old city district. Two Iraqi friends walking behind me were deep in conversation. I was looking downward as the sidewalk was uneven when I spied two discarded jigsaw puzzle pieces. For some reason I was tempted to pick one up. The image seemed appropriate, so many puzzle pieces we struggle to connect.

The new "G" passport that is now being required from all Iraqis is a piece of the puzzle. A piece that is adding to their misery and despair. At least 90 Shiite pilgrims en route to the holy shrine in Kerbala were killed today when two people walking in their midst blew themselves up. Other bombs brought the death toll to over 120. The day before a car bomb killed 30 in the historic book market section of Baghdad, an area I visited on more than one occasion lingering over books that spoke of Iraq's intellectual wealth. Now "pieces of flesh and remains of books were scattered everywhere" said one witness at the scene.

One of the gentlemen I was with at the Iraq embassy this morning escaped the violence of Baghdad about a month ago when he came to Amman with his wife and three children (ages 12, 10 and 7 yrs.). He hopes to get his long-awaited immigration visa to the U.S., to join his mother, four brothers and two sisters living in Detroit. They all have U.S. citizenship. He has been told by the U.S. embassy here in Amman that his visa will be forthcoming in about 8 weeks when his security check clears. To that I say, fair play.

But here comes the catch. The visa will be useless to them as neither he nor his wife and children have the new "G" passports. Given other Iraqi families I've met who find themselves in a similar predicament, I predict

that this family will be in Amman for many months to come. There is a good chance that their children will not be able to attend school.

Ironically, one of the articles in today's newspaper speaks about the out-of-school Iraqi children in Jordan. "U.N. figures place between 750,000 to 1 million Iraqis in the Kingdom; this means Jordan could be hosting 172,000 to 230,000 children who should be in school." A representative from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) states that Iraqi families who are in contact with them "place education for their children as a top priority....But in a country that has a clear lack of resources, unemployment and poverty rates that linger around 15 percent and burgeoning urban centres, providing education to thousands of extra children poses an added burden on the government." An Iraqi father is quoted "If the [Jordan] government announced that all [Iraqi] children can go to school and men could work, there will be four million persons at the border by tomorrow." (Linda Hindi, The Jordan Times, 3/6/07)

In addition to the passport rule change in the United States, the government of Iraq is a piece of the puzzle. Something recoils in me when I hear embassy people in Amman critically remark "The Iraq government needs to deliver to their people." It smacks of blame placing. It presumes that Iraq has a functional government, that everything is moving along smoothly. In a recent article in The Jordan Times a journalist wrote: "As the people who talked the United States into the Iraq war try to talk their way out of the blame for the mess they made, one dominant theme has emerged: blame the Iraqis. Our intentions were good; we did our best to help; but the Iraqis....would prefer to kill one another to seizing the freedom we brought them. It's not our fault that it turned out so badly." (Gwynne Dyer 3.4.07)

In a recent meeting with an official at the Iraqi embassy in Amman we were told that in about a week's time they would be taking applications in emergency cases

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Picking up the Pieces continued...

for the new "G" passport. These would then be sent by courier to Baghdad, the only place currently where the passports are being produced. The cost would be approximately \$20 and it would take about two weeks time. However, we were also told that, given the millions of Iraqis inside and outside of Iraq in need of the new "G" passport, the process of servicing everyone will take months if not years. We understand that there are only two machines available to produce the new electronically coded passport, machines made by a British company that has now pulled out. Today at the Iraq embassy we were told that the system is not yet in place, that it will take time.

The UNHCR is another piece of the puzzle as only refugees who have been referred by the UNHCR are eligible. Both here in Jordan as well as in Syria, hundreds of Iraqis are approaching the UNHCR offices daily to procure the new Refugee document. In Amman the UNHCR protection services were closed this week.

Overwhelmed and often unable to even answer their phones, they need to review case loads and carry out training of their staff.

The US government is a piece of the puzzle. Our administration has announced that we will accept one-third of the 20,000 refugees who will be screened and approved this year by the UNHCR. Sen. Ted Kennedy has stated that "we have a moral responsibility to do all that we can...to prevent this crisis from getting worse...Our invasion of Iraq led to this crisis." But the process of accepting refugees into the states is so difficult and lengthy, that it seems doubtful that even 3,500 Iraqis will be processed by the end of this year.

The "G" passport problem is not going to go away time soon. Neither is the Iraq refugee crisis. How can we begin to pick up some of the pieces?



Do Something Good

By Kathy Kelly

This past Tuesday, in Fairbanks, Alaska, nine people entered the office of Senator Ted Stevens to deliver their "emphatic request" that the Senator vote against supplemental funding for the war and then began reading the names of Iraqis and U.S. people who had died because of this war. They separated the names of U.S. troops by age. When ordered to leave, they were only half way through the commemoration of the twenty-one year old U.S. troops who died in Iraq. They began by reading the ages of the younger troops.

Seth Warncke, a University student, was issued a citation; Rob Mulford and Don Muller were taken to the Fairbanks Correctional Unit. They were released after being in jail for 23 hours.

Senator Steven's staff worker in the Fairbanks office assured the nine peace activists occupying the office that their efforts were worthless. "The Senator's aide told us that our action wouldn't do any good," said Rob Mulford, "but when we were locked up I knew we'd done something good because a woman jailer spotted us in our cells and she said, 'Oh! You guys are my heroes!'"

On a more somber note, Rob Mulford and Don Muller told me of a fellow prisoner whom they encountered in the correctional center. He was an Iraq war veteran, age 21. The guards were kind to him, but the young man was very disturbed and ended up fracturing his hand and fist, pounding a wall. After falling asleep, he repeatedly woke up, shouting and cursing, "You killed my friend, - I'm gonna' kill you," and intermittently sobbing, "It doesn't change. It never goes away."

Rob Mulford, himself an Air Force veteran and the local contact for Veterans for Peace, was watching from his cell.

Rob and Don are two of the several dozen people who've been arrested in the first two weeks of "the Occupation Project," a campaign to end U.S. funding for war in Iraq.

The same day, in Chicago, four women were kneeling in front of the Federal Building, chanting the names of Iraqis and U.S. service people killed in Iraq. Their statement read: "We are a poet, a doctor, a pregnant woman, and a grandmother. We are risking arrest today to publicly protest Senator Durbin's refusal to vote NO on the president's \$93 Billion dollar supplemental appropriations request to continue funding the immoral and unjust war in Iraq. If Senator Durbin is against this war, he must stop funding it. We will occupy the lobby of the federal building until removed because we strongly believe that this war must end." These women will go to trial insisting that Senators Durbin and Obama have "the power of the purse," —the power to end this war not by submitting resolutions almost certain to be vetoed by President Bush, but rather by simply refusing to fund it.

The Occupation Project is developing, nationally, into a sustained campaign. We welcome participation, and encourage further nonviolent efforts to resist appropriations for military action in Iraq, or against Iran, other than funds to withdraw troops from Iraq. It's wrong to fund killing and destruction in another country because people in that country oppose the Bush administration's political agenda for their country. What is more, U.S. soldiers will be killed in carrying out this agenda, and thousands of Iraqi civilians will be killed in "collateral damage," people who may or may not be opposed to the Bush administration's political agenda for their country.

The following day, Ash Wednesday, 25 Chicagoans held

an ecumenical prayer service and then attempted to deliver a letter to Senators Durbin and Obama. Many in the group were clergy, vested in their clerical garb. They had gathered to pray for forgiveness, as a nation, for the times we all had not spoken out against the war. They wanted to assure that the Senators of Illinois heard their remorse and understood their opposition to the war and its ongoing funding.

But when they approached the Federal Building, security officials quickly locked all entrances to the Federal Building. A member of Senator Obama's office staff told the assembled group that all staff members were in a meeting, but that they definitely wanted to receive their letter. Unfortunately, security officials at the Federal Building said nobody could enter. When a high school student who had joined the prayer service placed a cell phone call to Senator Durbin's office, he was disappointed that the staff member there hung up the phone after a very brief exchange. Eventually, three of Senator Durbin's staff members emerged from the Federal Building to receive the letter.

The constitution insists that congress shall make no law abridging the right of people to assemble peaceably for redress of grievance. We bear a terrible grievance as we exercise our responsibility to end the "war of choice" waged by the Bush administration.

As the Occupation Project develops, we carry, shoulder to shoulder, the responsibility that comes with hearing an agonized cry, epitomizing the horror of the consequences of war: "It doesn't go away."

Until the U.S. stops funding war in Iraq, we cannot go away either.

Kathy Kelly (Kathy@vcnv.org) co-coordinates Voices for Creative Nonviolence www.vcnv.org



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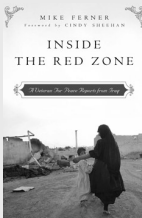
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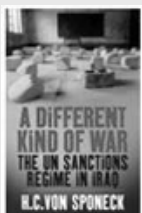
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Battlefield Without Borders, Iraq Poems, by David Smith-Ferri with a Foreword written by Kathy Kelly.
Available at:
www.BattlefieldWithoutBorders.org



Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace reports from Iraq, by Mike Ferner.
Available at:
www.MikeFerner.org



A Different Kind Of War: The UN Sanctions Regime In Iraq, by H.C. Von Sponeck
see vcnv.org home page for information

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

The following are available from Voices for Creative Nonviolence. All prices include postage. You may make checks out to VCNV and mail to VCNV; 1249 W. Argyle St #2; Chicago, IL 60640. Please note in the memo of the check which item you are purchasing and quantity.

“In a Time of Siege: Defying War and Sanctions in Iraq”, a **Peace Productions** documentary on the Voices in the Wilderness campaign to end U.S. economic sanctions. It includes footage of Voices members meeting U.S. Marines as they entered Baghdad following the Shock and Awe bombing. **\$20**

Other Lands Have Dreams: From Baghdad to Peking Prison by Kathy Kelly. **\$15**

Taking a Stand: A Guide To Peace Teams And Accompaniment Projects, by Elizabeth Boardman. **\$10**

September 11th Families for a Peaceful Tomorrows, edited by David Potorti. **\$15**