"Of course the people don't want war. But after all, it's the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it's always a simple matter to drag the people along whether it's a democracy, a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism, and exposing the country to greater danger. It works the same in any country.”

-- Herman Goering at the Nuremberg trials  (from Mike T)

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These materials are intended to increase each person's readiness to speak up, talk back, function as an informed citizen to reverse the US Imperial regime.

Iraq: Working to End the War in an Election Year (Quakers)

A combination of events in Iraq, congressional action, public education, protests, and public witness will be needed to end the U.S. war and military occupation of Iraq. Read FCNL Legislative Secretary Jim Fine's outline of a three point strategy: working around the country, making peace an election year issues, and lobbying Congress to change U.S. policy.

CONGRESSMAN KUCINICH would end the war simply by not funding it. Watch his events calendar.
http://www.dennis4president.com/upcoming-events/
The congressional contact information is on their website.
http://www.kucinich.house.gov/Contact/
TACOMA, Washington - The Army cannot hold a second court-martial for an Iraq war objector until the resolution of the soldier's claim that it would violate his right against double jeopardy, a federal judge ruled.

Watada's second court-martial had been scheduled to begin last month when his lawyers asked the federal court to step in. The soldier contends a second trial would violate his rights by trying him twice for the same charges.

Watada contends that the war in Iraq is illegal and that he would be party to war crimes if he served there. He is also charged with conduct unbecoming an officer for denouncing President George W. Bush and the war. If convicted, he could be sentenced to six years in prison and be dishonorably discharged. "This is an enormous victory, but it is not yet over," Watada attorney Kenneth Kagan said in a statement. The federal judge did not indicate what the next steps would be.

"We look forward to the opportunity to file additional briefs to further explain to the District Court judge the full extent of the protections and safeguards" afforded under the military justice system at the trial court and appellate levels, Fort Lewis spokesman Joseph Piek said.

Settle ruled on Oct. 5 that his court had jurisdiction on the request for an emergency stay and that Watada's claim was "not frivolous. The judge then asked for additional briefs, leading to Thursday's ruling.

Watada's term of service in the military ended in December, but the legal proceedings have prevented his discharge. He lives in Olympia and continues to perform administrative duties at Fort Lewis, south of Seattle. (from Sophia F)


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**Winter Soldiers: Iraq and Afghanistan**

On the weekend of 13-15 March, 2008, Iraq Veterans Against the War will assemble history's largest gathering of US veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Iraqi and Afghan survivors. They will provide first hand accounts of their experiences and reveal the truth of occupation.

We support Iraq Veterans Against the War and their Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan Investigation. Join us in supporting their efforts to reveal truth in the way that only those who lived it can, by signing the statement of support: [http://www.ivaw.org/wintersoldierstatmentofsupport](http://www.ivaw.org/wintersoldierstatmentofsupport)

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**America Cannot Afford Bush's "Success"**

Remember when Bush declared "Mission Accomplished" in Iraq? Now he's calling Iraq a "success."

Bush whined, "It's unconscionable to deny funds to our troops in harm's way because some in Congress want to force a self-defeating policy, especially when we're seeing the **benefits of success.**"
The "benefits of success"??

Bush's "success" unleashed chaos that murdered 1 million Iraqis and drove 4 million more out of their homes into desperate poverty. Bush's "success" created a sectarian Shia government that ethnically cleansed Baghdad of Sunnis and Christians and corruptly lined its pockets with our tax dollars. Bush's "success" killed nearly 4,000 brave young Americans and maimed tens of thousands more, both physically and mentally, leading to 120 veterans' suicides each week. Bush's "success" broke our military, corrupted our intelligence agencies, and embraced torture as official U.S. policy.

Bush's "success" empowered Osama Bin Laden and handed half of Afghanistan back to the Taliban. Bush's "success" empowered dangerous dictators in Russia, Pakistan, Burma, Iran and Venezuela. Bush's "success" increased global terror and hatred of the United States.

Bush's "success" wasted $500 billion on Iraq, with trillions more to come. Bush's "success" added $4 trillion to our national debt and trillions more in future debts. Bush's "success" drove the price of oil from $16/barrel to nearly $100/barrel, and tripled the price of gasoline from $1.06 to $3.11. America - and the world - cannot afford any more of Bush's "success."

Tell Congress no more funds for Iraq:
http://www.democrats.com/iraq-petition

SENATOR LINCOLN (202) 224-4843 Fax: (202) 228-1371.
Fayetteville office:  251-1380
Senator Mark Pryor: Phone: (202) 224-2353 Fax: (202) 228-0908
CONGRESSMAN Boozman: Lowell office: 479-725-0400.
DC address: 1708 Longworth House Office Bldng., Washington, DC 20515; 202-225-4301.

VIDEO FROM IRAQI RESISTANCE
http://youtube.com/watch?v=C93qshgaVkc

MAYORS VOTE TO LEAVE IRAQ

LOS ANGELES - The Associated Press - The U.S. Conference of Mayors narrowly endorsed a resolution Monday calling for the Bush administration to begin planning for the "swift and prudent" withdrawal of troops from Iraq after a chaotic debate that echoed political divisions across the country....

The largely symbolic resolution, sponsored by Providence, R.I., Mayor David Cicilline, said the conference supports U.S. troops "completely and 110 percent" but called on the Bush White House to "begin planning immediately for the swift and prudent redeployment of the U.S. Armed Forces."

It called on the federal government to provide funding for medical, psychological, housing and other services for troops when they come home.

"Continued U.S. military presence in Iraq is resulting in the tragic loss of American lives and wounding of American soldiers," the resolution said. The Iraq war "is reducing federal funds ... for needed domestic investments in education, health care, public safety, homeland security and more."

IRAQ WAR RESOLUTION of the U.S. Conference of Mayors

WHEREAS, the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces continue to serve in Iraq with bravery and distinction;

and WHEREAS, the current sectarian violence in Iraq continues to claim the lives of U.S. Military Personnel and Iraqi Civilians;
and WHEREAS, peace and stability can only be achieved in Iraq through the resolution of political
differences within that country;

and WHEREAS, the restoration of domestic peace and order requires the active intervention and
leadership of the Iraqi Government, respecting the rights of all Iraqis;

and WHEREAS, continued U.S. Military presence in Iraq is resulting in the tragic loss of American lives
and wounding of American soldiers;

and WHEREAS, the continued U.S. Military presence in Iraq is reducing Federal Funds available for
needed domestic investments in education, health care, public safety, homeland security, and more;

and WHEREAS, The United States Conference of Mayors completely and 110 percent supports those
men and women that are defending, have defended and will defend our country,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls for the
Administration to begin planning immediately for the swift and prudent redeployment of the US Armed
Forces;

and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls for the accelerated training
of Iraqâ€™s Armed Forces to be able to maintain stability and civil order;

and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls for future U.S. Military
Aid; reconstruction funding, and other support to be tied to the achievement of verifiable goals by the
Iraqi government, including ridding Iraqi security forces of militia or sectarian influence;

and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls for the Administration, as
part of a comprehensive plan for stability in the region, to convene an international conference to identify
strategies and methods for reducing regional interference in Iraq and increasing regional support of
achieving peace and stability in Iraq;

and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The U.S Conference of Mayors calls for full funding of services
to the brave men and women returning after service in the United States Armed Forces, including
medical, psychological, housing and other support services, and support to local governments funding
such services.

MEETING RESISTANCE

A. MEETING RESISTANCE
Yesterday, MEETING RESISTANCE co-director/producer MOLLY BINGHAM was awarded the COURAGE IN FILMMAKING Award in the Documentary Category of the Women's Film Critics Circle. For full list of winners, click here. The Women Film Critics Circle is an association of 40 women film critics and scholars from around the country, who are involved in print, radio, online and TV broadcast media who came together to form the first women critics organization in the country, in the belief that women's perspectives and voices in film criticism need to be recognized fully.

MORE
For full details please vist: www.meetingresistance.com/screenings.html

To watch the trailer click here

For further information about MEETING RESISTANCE please visit
Our Troops Must Leave Iraq
by Walter Cronkite and David Krieger

The American people no longer support the war in Iraq. The war is being carried on by a stubborn president who, like Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon during the Vietnam War, does not want to lose. But from the beginning this has been an ill-considered and poorly prosecuted war that, like the Vietnam War, has diminished respect for America. We believe Mr. Bush would like to drag the war on long enough to hand it off to another president.

The war in Iraq reminds us of the tragedy of the Vietnam War. Both wars began with false assertions by the president to the American people and the Congress. Like Vietnam, the Iraq War has introduced a new vocabulary: “shock and awe,” “mission accomplished,” “the surge.” Like Vietnam, we have destroyed cities in order to save them. It is not a strategy for success.

The Bush administration has attempted to forestall ending the war by putting in more troops, but more troops will not solve the problem. We have lost the hearts and minds of most of the Iraqi people, and victory no longer seems to be even a remote possibility. It is time to end our occupation of Iraq, and bring our troops home.

This war has had only limited body counts. There are reports that more than one million Iraqis have died in the war. These reports cannot be corroborated because the US military does not make public the number of the Iraqi dead and injured. There are also reports that some four million Iraqis have been displaced and are refugees either abroad or within their own country. Iraqis with the resources to leave the country have left. They are frightened. They don’t trust the US, its allies or its mercenaries to protect them and their interests.

We know more about the body counts of American soldiers in Iraq. Some 4,000 American soldiers have been killed in this war, about a third more than the number of people who died in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. And some 28,000 American soldiers have suffered debilitating injuries. Many more have been affected by the trauma of war in ways that they will have to live with for the rest of their lives - ways that will have serious effects not only on their lives and the lives of their loved ones, but on society as a whole. Due to woefully inadequate resources being provided, our injured soldiers are not receiving the medical treatment and mental health care that they deserve.

The invasion of Iraq was illegal from the start. Not only was Congress lied to in order to secure its support for the invasion of Iraq, but the war lacked the support of the United Nations Security Council and thus was an aggressive war initiated on the false pretenses of weapons of mass
destruction. There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Nor has any assertion of a relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda proven to be true. In the end, democracy has not come to Iraq. Its government is still being forced to bend to the will of the US administration.

What the war has accomplished is the undermining of US credibility throughout the world, the weakening of our military forces, and the erosion of our Bill of Rights. Nobel Laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz calculates that the war is costing American tax payers more than $1 trillion. This amount could double if we continue the war. Each minute we are spending $500,000 in Iraq. Our losses are incalculable. It is time to remove our military forces from Iraq.

We must ask ourselves whether continuing to pursue this war is benefiting the American people or weakening us. We must ask whether continuing the war is benefiting the Iraqi people or inflicting greater suffering upon them. We believe the answer to these inquiries is that both the American and Iraqi people would benefit by ending the US military presence in Iraq.

Moving forward is not complicated, but it will require courage. Step one is to proceed with the rapid withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and hand over the responsibility for the security of Iraq to Iraqi forces. Step two is to remove our military bases from Iraq and to turn Iraqi oil over to Iraqis. Step three is to provide resources to the Iraqis to rebuild the infrastructure that has been destroyed in the war.

Congress must act. Although Congress never declared war, as required by the Constitution, they did give the president the authority to invade Iraq. Congress must now withdraw that authority and cease its funding of the war.

It is not likely, however, that Congress will act unless the American people make their voices heard with unmistakable clarity. That is the way the Vietnam War was brought to an end. It is the way that the Iraq War will also be brought to an end. The only question is whether it will be now, or whether the war will drag on, with all the suffering that implies, to an even more tragic, costly and degrading defeat. We will be a better, stronger and more decent country to bring the troops home now.

*Walter Cronkite* is the former long-time anchor for CBS Evening News. *David Krieger* is President of the *Nuclear Age Peace Foundation*.

Iraq and Afghanistan violated just war theory, says Williams

Ekklesia [http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/6210](http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/6210)

By staff writers  12 Nov 2007

On the eve of Remembrance Sunday, 11 November 2007, Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams described the Western-backed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as a tragic mess which failed to conform to the principles of 'just war' theory and brought great suffering.
He told an audience of 600 clergy and lay church leaders that: “One of the aspects of traditional just war theory is that you need to know what would count as a good end and how you would know when you have that and what to do then.”

Dr Williams continued: “I don't think we had that in place sadly. I don't think we knew what we would do next or what would count as our ending. And that is the tragedy.”

Christian peace campaigners have criticised the accommodation of mainline churches to violence during the 1700 years of Christendom, arguing that the core Gospel message calls for a more creative, nonviolent role in a violent and divided world.

The 'just war' theory was adopted when the Church moved away from its early pacifism. It has been used to call for limits on war, but has rarely succeeded. It was also used to justify the defence of Christian empires.

"Just war theory points to ways of limiting conflict, but historic Christianity has much more to offer in terms of creative alternatives and practical non-violence in line with the message of Jesus and well-researched modern theories of conflict transformation", suggests Simon Barrow of the think tank Ekklesia, which examines religion in public life.

$COST OF THE WARS$

Contents:
Statistics
Suicides
Desertions
Rapes
Murders

Iraq, Afghan War Costs Are $1.6 Trillion and Rising

IRAQ WAR DATA (from VFP)
>> Something to ponder this Veteran's Day. The ratio of wounded-to-killed US soldiers is 8/1 (WW II was 2/1, Vietnam 3/1) The numbers of amputations have not been this high since the Civil War, according to a study. Of course, the inestimable cost is mental illness, the effects of which will affect families for generations.
Support our troops- Bring them home! Peace, Taj
Iraq War Statistics as of NOV 5,
>> From Deborah White, Nov 8 2007
>>
>> 3,848 US Soldiers Killed, 28,451 Seriously Wounded
>> For your quick reading, I've listed key statistics about the Iraq War, taken primarily from data analyzed by various think tanks,
>> including The Brookings Institution's Iraq Index, and from mainstream media sources. Data is presented as of November 5, 2007, except as
US SPENDING IN IRAQ

Spent & Approved War-Spending - About $600 billion of US taxpayers' funds. President Bush has requested another $200 billion for 2008, which would bring the cumulative total to close to $800 billion.

U.S. Daily Spending in Iraq - over $270 million, in November 2007

Cost of deploying one U.S. soldier for one year in Iraq - $390,000 (Congressional Research Service)

Lost & Unaccounted for in Iraq - $9 billion of US taxpayers' money and $549.7 million in spare parts shipped in 2004 to US contractors.

Mismanaged & Wasted in Iraq - $10 billion, per February 2007 Congressional hearings

Halliburton Overcharges Classified by the Pentagon as Unreasonable and Unsupported - $1.4 billion

Amount paid to KBR, a former Halliburton division, to supply U.S. military in Iraq with food, fuel, housing and other items - $20 billion

Portion of the $20 billion paid to KBR that Pentagon auditors deem "questionable or supportable" - $3.2 billion

Number of major U.S. bases in Iraq - 75 (The Nation/New York Times)

TROOPS IN IRAQ

Iraqi Troops Trained and Able to Function Independent of U.S. Forces - 6,000 as of May 2007 (per NBC's "Meet the Press" on May 20, 2007)

Troops in Iraq - Total 182,668, including
171,000 from the US, 5,000 from the UK, 2,000 from Georgia, 1,200 from South Korea and 3,468 from all other nations.

US Troop Casualties - 3,848 US troops; 98% male. 90% non-officers; 80% active duty, 12% National Guard; 74% Caucasian, 10% African-American, 11% Latino. 18% killed by non-hostile causes. 51% of US casualties were under 25 years old. 70% were from the US Army.

Non-US Troop Casualties - Total 304, with 171 from the UK.

US Troops Wounded - 28,451, 20% of which are serious brain or spinal injuries (total excludes psychological injuries).

US Troops with Serious Mental Health Problems - 30% of US troops develop serious mental health problems within 3 to 4 months of returning home.

US Military Helicopters Downed in Iraq - 68 total, at least 36 by enemy fire.

IRAQI TROOPS, CIVILIANS & OTHERS IN IRAQ


Journalists killed - 123, 83 by murder and 40 by acts of war.

Journalists killed by US Forces - 14.

Iraqi Police and Soldiers Killed - 7,620.

Iraqi Civilians Killed, Estimated - A UN issued report dated Sept 20, 2006 stating that Iraqi civilian casualties have been significantly under-reported. Casualties are reported at 50,000 to over 100,000, but may be much higher. Some informed estimates place Iraqi civilian casualties at over 600,000.
Iraqi Insurgents Killed, Roughly Estimated - 
55,000

Non-Iraqi Contractors and Civilian Workers
Killed - 541

Non-Iraqi Kidnapped - 305, including 54 killed, 
147 released, 4
escaped, 6 rescued and 94 status unknown.

Daily Insurgent Attacks, Feb 2004 - 14

Daily Insurgent Attacks, July 2005 - 70

Daily Insurgent Attacks, May 2007 - 163

Estimated Insurgency Strength, Nov 2003 - 
15,000

Estimated Insurgency Strength, Oct 2006 - 
20,000 - 30,000

Estimated Insurgency Strength, June 2007 - 
70,000

QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS

Iraqis Displaced Inside Iraq, by Iraq War, as
of May 2007 - 2,255,000

Iraqi Refugees in Syria & Jordan - 2.1 million
to 2.25 million

Iraqi Unemployment Rate - 27 to 60%, where
curfew not in effect

Consumer Price Inflation in 2006 - 50%

Iraqi Children Suffering from Chronic
Malnutrition - 28% in June 2007
(Per CNN.com, July 30, 2007)

Percent of professionals who have left Iraq
since 2003 - 40%

Iraqi Physicians Before 2003 Invasion - 34,000

Iraqi Physicians Who Have Left Iraq Since 2005
Invasion - 12,000

Iraqi Physicians Murdered Since 2003 Invasion - 
2,000

Average Daily Hours Iraqi Homes Have
Electricity - 1 to 2 hours, per Ryan Crocker, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq (Per Los Angeles Times, July 27, 2007)

Average Daily Hours Iraqi Homes Have Electricity - 10.9 in May 2007
Average Daily Hours Baghdad Homes Have Electricity - 5.6 in May 2007
Pre-War Daily Hours Baghdad Homes Have Electricity - 16 to 24
Number of Iraqi Homes Connected to Sewer Systems - 37%
Iraqis without access to adequate water supplies - 70% (Per CNN.com, July 30, 2007)
Water Treatment Plants Rehabilitated - 22%

RESULTS OF POLL Taken in Iraq in August 2005 by the British Ministry of Defense (Source: Brookings Institute)
Iraqis "strongly opposed to presence of coalition troops - 82%
Iraqis who believe Coalition forces are responsible for any improvement in security - less than 1%
Iraqis who feel less secure because of the occupation - 67%
Iraqis who do not have confidence in multi-national forces - 72%

COST OF THE WARS: SUICIDES
*USA Today* December 13, 2007
"Suspected Army suicides set record"
by Gregg Zoroya.
A record number of soldiers -- 109 -- have killed themselves this year, according to Army statistics showing confirmed or suspected suicides. The deaths occur as soldiers serve longer combat deployments and the Army spends $100 million on support programs. "Soldiers, families and equipment are stretched and stressed," Gen. George Casey, Army chief of staff, told Congress last month. The Army provided suicide statistics to Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash. Her staff shared them with USA TODAY. Those numbers show 77 confirmed suicides Army-wide this year through
Nov. 27 and 32 other deaths pending final determination as suicides.
FIND MORE STORIES IN: Iraq | Afghanistan | Army | Sen. Patty Murray
The Army updated those statistics Wednesday, confirming 85 suicides, including 27 in Iraq and four in Afghanistan.
The highest number of Army suicides recorded since 1990 was 102 in 1992 -- a period when the service was 20% larger than today.
A total of 109 suicides this year would equal a rate of 18.4 per 100,000, the highest since the Army started counting in 1980. The civilian suicide rate was 11 per 100,000 in 2004, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
The military hasn't erased the stigma surrounding mental health issues, so troubled soldiers often do not seek help, Murray says.
"I want to say I'm surprised" by the suicide increase, she says. "But when we're not doing everything we can to deal with mental health, when we know the Army is under such stress, it's not a surprise. It has to be a wakeup call."
The Army has moved more aggressively in recent years to stem suicides, instituting mandatory training for every soldier about mental health and establishing a program to study its suicides.
Research released by the Army in August shows that almost 70% of suicides in 2006 were spurred by failed relationships.
The Army continues to improve its suicide-prevention programs, spokesman Paul Boyce said Wednesday. A hotline number -- 800-342-9647 -- is also available.
Since Sept. 11, 2001, records show that 128 soldiers have killed themselves while serving in Iraq or Afghanistan.
One was Spc. Travis Virgadamo, 19, of Las Vegas. His family said he was on suicide watch but was eventually taken off, and his gun was returned. "That night he killed himself," says his grandmother, Kate O'Brien, of Pahrump, Nev.
O'Brien says her grandson desperately wanted to come home. "He would say, 'Grandma, pray for me.' " she says. "What good is somebody (to the war effort) that is under such stress?"

SENATOR LINCOLN (202) 224-4843 Fax: (202) 228-1371.
Fayetteville office: 251-1380

Senator Mark Pryor: Phone: (202) 224-2353 Fax: (202) 228-0908

CONGRESSMAN Boozman: Lowell office: 479-725-0400.

"Army Desertion Rate Jumps Sharply" http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,156409,00.html?ESRC...
1 of 2 11/25/2007 3:35 PM

Associated Press | November 16, 2007
WASHINGTON - Soldiers strained by six years at war are deserting their posts at the highest rate since 1980, with the number of Army deserters this
year showing an 80 percent increase since the United States invaded Iraq in 2003. While the totals are still far lower than they were during the Vietnam war, when the draft was in effect, they show a steady increase over the past four years and a 42 percent jump since last year. According to the Army, about nine in every 1,000 soldiers deserted in fiscal year 2007, which ended Sept. 30, compared to nearly seven per 1,000 a year earlier. Overall, 4,698 soldiers deserted this year, compared to 3,301 last year. The increase comes as the Army continues to bear the brunt of the war demands with many soldiers serving repeated, lengthy tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Military leaders - including Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey - have acknowledged that the Army has been stretched nearly to the breaking point by the combat. And efforts are under way to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps to lessen the burden and give troops more time off between deployments. Despite the continued increase in desertions, however, an Associated Press examination of Pentagon figures earlier this year showed that the military does little to find those who bolt, and rarely prosecutes the ones they get. Some are allowed to simply return to their units, while most are given less-than-honorable discharges.

Sound Off...What do you think? Join the discussion.

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SENATOR LINCOLN (202) 224-4843 Fax: (202) 228-1371.
Fayetteville office: 251-1380

“Unaccountable Rape In Iraq” December 17, 2007

In July 2005, on her "fourth night in a Green Zone barracks in Baghdad," former Halliburton/KBR employee Jamie Leigh Jones says she "accepted a 'special drink' from male KBR employees," after which she doesn't "remember anything at all" until she "woke up naked," "bleeding," and "bruised." "I remember looking down and seeing the bruises between my inner thighs, at that moment my heart sank," Jones told an ABC-affiliate in Houston. According to Jones, "an examination by Army doctors showed she had been raped 'both vaginally and anally,'" but somehow "the rape kit" with her examination's results "disappeared after it was handed over to KBR security officers." After reporting her rape to KBR, Jones says "the company put her under guard in a shipping container with a bed and warned her that if she left Iraq for medical treatment, she'd be out of a job." After "at least 24 hours" in the container "without food or water," a "sympathetic guard" allowed her to call her family in Texas, who contacted Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX). Poe then contacted the State Department, "which quickly dispatched agents from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad" to free Jones from the container. In the two years since Jones returned from Iraq, "the Justice Department has brought no criminal charges in the matter" and Poe says "neither the departments of State nor Justice will give him answers on the status of the Jones investigation." Frustrated by the government's inaction, Jones is now taking her case to the civil court system, but KBR is pushing for it to be heard in "private arbitration," without a "public record or transcript."
KBR'S 'INADEQUATE' DEFENSE: KBR, formerly known as Kellogg, Brown and Root and until 2006, a subsidiary of Halliburton, is "the largest" private "employer of Americans" in Iraq, with "nearly 14,000 U.S. workers." The company is aggressively resisting Jones's claims. In a memo to company employees, KBR CEO Bill Utt "disputes portions of Ms. Jones' version of the facts" and alleges "inaccuracies in the accounts of the incident in questions." In particular, KBR says "one of its human resources employees tended to Jones following the incident, provided her with food, and helped her contact her family." Jamie Armstrong, the human resources employee, confirmed to KBR's version of events to ABC News, but cautioned that "her memory may not be accurate" because "this happened several years ago." In his memo to employees, Utt emphasizes that the company "expressed" its "position in detail to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)," but the Houston Chronicle reports "that the EEOC's Houston office found KBR's investigation into Jones's allegations were 'inadequate and did not effect an adequate remedy.'" According to the Chronicle, KBR told the EEOC that "one of the men accused in the rape" said that Jones "consented to have sex with him." Jones's lawyers responded by to KBR's defense by saying that "attacking the victim is the oldest trick in the book."

CONGRESS STEPS UP: For the past two years, Poe has been championing Jones's case, pushing federal investigators to take action. "I think it is the responsibility of our government, the Justice Department and the State Department," Poe told ABC News. "When crimes occur against American citizens overseas in Iraq, contractors that are paid by the American public, that we pursue the criminal cases as best as we possibly can and that people are prosecuted." After ABC News reported on Jones's case last week, the House Judiciary Committee announced that it would hold a hearing on Jones's allegations next Wednesday. In the past week, multiple members of Congress have written to the Attorney General, Secretary of Defense, and Secretary of State urging them to act immediately to investigate Ms. Jones's claims." In his letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) raised concerns about a second KBR employee alleging sexual assault while working for the company in Iraq. "I am deeply troubled by recent reports that at least two women who worked in Iraq under contractors for the Department of Defense were sexually assaulted by male coworkers," Nelson wrote to Gates.

NOT AN 'ISOLATED CASE?:' In her lawsuit, Jones asserts that "KBR and Halliburton created a 'boys will be boys' atmosphere at the company barracks which put her and other female employees at risk." "I think that the men who are there believe that they live without laws," Jones's lawyer Todd Kelly told ABC News. Another former KBR employee, Linda Lindsey, supports Jones's claims about the "boys will be boys" environment of KBR barracks in Iraq. "I saw rampant sexual harassment and discrimination," said Lindsey in a sworn affidavit for Jones's case. During an appearance on CNN's Lou Dobbs Tonight last week, Poe said he does not think that Jones's alleged rape "is an isolated case of sexual assault against American citizens in Baghdad by coworkers," and he wants "the other victims to notify" his office immediately. In his letter to Gates, Nelson mentions "a second alleged assault, this time of a woman from Florida who reportedly worked for a KBR subsidiary in Ramadi, Iraq in 2005." Houston's CBS affiliate KHOU says "a North Carolina woman, who also said she was assaulted by a KBR contractor," will testify along with Jones on Wednesday, though the House Judiciary Committee has yet to release an official witness list.

Subject: Help hold contractors accountable

Hi, Jamie Leigh Jones was working in Iraq for a subsidiary of Halliburton when she was drugged and brutally gang-raped by several coworkers.

For the last two years, she's been asking the US government to hold the perpetrators accountable, but the men who raped her may never be brought to justice because Halliburton and other contractors in Iraq aren't subject to US or Iraqi laws.
TAKE ACTION
I just signed a petition urging Congress to investigate the rape of Jamie Leigh Jones, hold those involved accountable, and bring US contractors under the jurisdiction of US law. Can you join me at the link below?

http://pol.moveon.org/contractors_accountable/?r_by=-1190574-.WsBvX&rc=paste

KILLINGS BY US SOLDIERS BACK HOME
> Across America, Deadly Echoes of Foreign Battles
>
> By DEBORAH SONTAG and LIZETTE ALVAREZ Published: January 13, 2008
>
> Late one night in the summer of 2005, Matthew Sepi, a 20-year-old Iraq combat veteran, headed out to a 7-Eleven in the seedy Las Vegas neighborhood where he had settled after leaving the Army.
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> This particular 7-Eleven sits in the shadow of the Stratosphere casino-hotel in a section of town called the Naked City. By day, the area, littered with malt liquor cans, looks depressed but not menacing. By night, it becomes, in the words of a local homicide detective, "like Falluja."
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> Mr. Sepi did not like to venture outside too late. But, plagued by nightmares about an Iraqi civilian killed by his unit, he often needed alcohol to fall asleep. And so it was that night, when, seized by a gut feeling of lurking danger, he slid a trench coat over his slight frame - and tucked an assault rifle inside it.
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> "Matthew knew he shouldn't be taking his AK-47 to the 7-Eleven," Detective Laura Andersen said, "but he was scared to death in that neighborhood, he was military trained and, in his mind, he needed the weapon to protect himself."
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> Head bowed, Mr. Sepi scurried down an alley, ignoring shouts about trespassing on gang turf. A battle-weary grenadier who was still legally under-age, he paid a stranger to buy him two tall cans of beer, his self-prescribed treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.
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> As Mr. Sepi started home, two gang members, both large and both armed, stepped out of the darkness. Mr. Sepi said in an interview that he spied the butt of a gun, heard a boom, saw a flash and "just snapped."
In the end, one gang member lay dead, bleeding onto the pavement. The other was wounded. And Mr. Sepi fled, "breaking contact" with the enemy, as he later described it. With his rifle raised, he crept home, loaded 180 rounds of ammunition into his car and drove until police lights flashed behind him.

"Who did I take fire from?" he asked urgently. Wearing his Army camouflage pants, the diminutive young man said he had been ambushed and then instinctively "engaged the targets." He shook. He also cried.

"I felt very bad for him," Detective Andersen said.

Nonetheless, Mr. Sepi was booked, and a local newspaper soon reported: "Iraq veteran arrested in killing."

Town by town across the country, headlines have been telling similar stories. Lakewood, Wash.: "Family Blames Iraq After Son Kills Wife." Pierre, S.D.: "Soldier Charged With Murder Testifies About Postwar Stress."

Colorado Springs: "Iraq War Vets Suspected in Two Slayings, Crime Ring."

Individually, these are stories of local crimes, gut-wrenching postscripts to the war for the military men, their victims and their communities. Taken together, they paint the patchwork picture of a quiet phenomenon, tracing a cross-country trail of death and heartbreak.

The New York Times found 121 cases in which veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan committed a killing in this country, or were charged with one, after their return from war. In many of those cases, combat trauma and the stress of deployment - along with alcohol abuse, family discord and other attendant problems - appear to have set the stage for a tragedy that was part destruction, part self-destruction.

Three-quarters of these veterans were still in the military at the time of the killing. More than half the killings involved guns, and the rest were stabbings, beatings, strangulations and bathtub drownings. Twenty-five offenders faced murder, manslaughter or homicide charges for fatal car crashes resulting from drunken, reckless or suicidal driving.

About a third of the victims were spouses, girlfriends, children or other relatives, among them 2-year-old
Krisiauna Calaira Lewis, whose 20-year-old father slammed her against a wall when he was recuperating in Texas from a bombing near Falluja that blew off his foot and shook up his brain.

A quarter of the victims were fellow service members, including Specialist Richard Davis of the Army, who was stabbed repeatedly and then set ablaze, his body hidden in the woods by fellow soldiers a day after they all returned from Iraq.

And the rest were acquaintances or strangers, among them Noah P. Gamez, 21, who was breaking into a car at a Tucson motel when an Iraq combat veteran, also 21, caught him, shot him dead and then killed himself outside San Diego with one of several guns found in his car.

Tracking the Killings

The Pentagon does not keep track of such killings, most of which are prosecuted not by the military justice system but by civilian courts in state after state. Neither does the Justice Department.

To compile and analyze its list, The Times conducted a search of local news reports, examined police, court and military records and interviewed the defendants, their lawyers and families, the victims' families and military and law enforcement officials.

This reporting most likely uncovered only the minimum number of such cases, given that not all killings, especially in big cities and on military bases, are reported publicly or in detail. Also, it was often not possible to determine the deployment history of other service members arrested on homicide charges.

The Times used the same methods to research homicides involving all active-duty military personnel and new veterans for the six years before and after the present wartime period began with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

This showed an 89 percent increase during the present wartime period, to 349 cases from 184, about three-quarters of which involved Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. The increase occurred even though there have been fewer troops stationed in the United States in the last six years and the American homicide rate has been,
The Pentagon was given The Times's roster of homicides. It declined to comment because, a spokesman, Lt. Col. Les Melnyk, said, the Department of Defense could not duplicate the newspaper's research. Further, Colonel Melnyk questioned the validity of comparing prewar and wartime numbers based on news media reports, saying that the current increase might be explained by "an increase in awareness of military service by reporters since 9/11." He also questioned the value of "lumping together different crimes such as involuntary manslaughter with first-degree homicide."

Given that many veterans rebound successfully from their war experiences and some flourish as a result of them, veterans groups have long deplored the attention paid to the minority of soldiers who fail to readjust to civilian life.

After World War I, the American Legion passed a resolution asking the press "to subordinate whatever slight news value there may be in playing up the ex-service member angle in stories of crime or offense against the peace." An article in the Veterans of Foreign Wars magazine in 2006 referred with disdain to the pervasive "wacko-vet myth," which, veterans say, makes it difficult for them to find jobs.

Clearly, committing homicide is an extreme manifestation of dysfunction for returning veterans, many of whom struggle in quieter ways, with crumbling marriages, mounting debt, deepening alcohol dependence or more-minor tangles with the law.

But these killings provide a kind of echo sounding for the profound depths to which some veterans have fallen, whether at the bottom of a downward spiral or in a sudden burst of violence.

Thirteen of these veterans took their own lives after the killings, and two more were fatally shot by the police. Several more attempted suicide or expressed a death wish, like Joshua Pol, a former soldier convicted of vehicular homicide, who told a judge in Montana in 2006, "To be honest with you, I really wish I had died in Iraq."

In some of the cases involving veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, the fact that the suspect went to war bears
> no apparent relationship to the crime committed or to
> the prosecution and punishment. But in many of the
> cases, the deployment of the service member invariably
> becomes a factor of some sort as the legal system,
> families and communities grapple to make sense of the
> crimes.
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> This is especially stark where a previously upstanding
> young man - there is one woman among the 121 - appears
> to have committed a random act of violence. And The
> Times's analysis showed that the overwhelming majority
> of these young men, unlike most civilian homicide
> offenders, had no criminal history.
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> "When they've been in combat, you have to suspect
> immediately that combat has had some effect, especially
> with people who haven't shown these tendencies in the
> past," said Robert Jay Lifton, a lecturer in psychiatry
> at Harvard Medical School/Cambridge Health Alliance who
> used to run "rap groups" for Vietnam veterans and fought
> to earn recognition for what became known as post-
> traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.
>
> "Everything is multicausational, of course," Dr. Lifton
> continued. "But combat, especially in a
> counterinsurgency war, is such a powerful experience
> that to discount it would be artificial."
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> Few of these 121 war veterans received more than a
> cursory mental health screening at the end of their
> deployments, according to interviews with the veterans,
> lawyers, relatives and prosecutors. Many displayed
> symptoms of combat trauma after their return, those
> interviews show, but they were not evaluated for or
> received a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder
> until after they were arrested for homicides.
>
> What is clear is that experiences on the streets of
> Baghdad and Falluja shadowed these men back to places
> like Longview, Tex., and Edwardsville, Ill.
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> "He came back different" is the shared refrain of the
> defendants' family members, who mention irritability,
> detachment, volatility, sleeplessness, excessive
> drinking or drug use, and keeping a gun at hand.
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> "You are unleashing certain things in a human being we
> don't allow in civic society, and getting it all back in
> the box can be difficult for some people," said William
> C. Gentry, an Army reservist and Iraq veteran who works
When Archie O'Neil, a gunnery sergeant in the Marines, returned from a job handling dead bodies in Iraq, he became increasingly paranoid, jumpy and fearful - moving into his garage, eating M.R.E.'s, wearing his camouflage uniform, drinking heavily and carrying a gun at all times, even to answer the doorbell.

"It was like I put one person on a ship and sent him over there, and they sent me a totally different person back," Monique O'Neil, his wife, testified.

A well-respected and decorated noncommissioned officer who did not want to endanger his chances for advancement, Sergeant O'Neil did not seek help for the PTSD that would later be diagnosed by government psychologists. "The Marine way," his lawyer said at a preliminary hearing, "was to suck it up."

On the eve of his second deployment to Iraq in 2004, Sergeant O'Neil fatally shot his mistress, Kimberly O'Neal, after she threatened to kill his family while he was gone.

During a military trial at Camp Pendleton, Calif., a Marine defense lawyer argued that "the ravages of war" provided the "trigger" for the killing. In 2005, a military jury convicted Sergeant O'Neil of murder but declined to impose the minimum sentence, life with the possibility of parole, considering it too harsh. A second jury, however, convened only for sentencing, voted the maximum penalty, life without parole. The case is on appeal.

As with Sergeant O'Neil, a connection between a veteran's combat service and his crime is sometimes declared overtly. Other times, though, the Iraq connection is a lingering question mark as offenders' relatives struggle to understand how a strait-laced teenager or family man or wounded veteran ended up behind bars - or dead.

That happened in the case of Stephen Sherwood, who enlisted in the Army at 34 to obtain medical insurance when his wife got pregnant. He may never have been screened for combat trauma.

Yet Mr. Sherwood shot his wife and then himself nine days after returning from Iraq in the summer of 2005.
Several months before, the other soldiers in his tank unit had been killed by a rocket attack while he was on a two-week leave to celebrate the first birthday of his now-orphaned son.

"When he got back to Iraq, everyone was dead," his father, Robert Sherwood, said. "He had survivor's guilt." Then his wife informed him that she wanted to end their marriage.

After the murder-suicide, Mr. Sherwood's parents could not help but wonder what role Iraq played and whether counseling might have helped keep their son away from the brink.

"Ah boy, the amount of heartbreak involved in all of this," said Dr. Jonathan Shay, a psychiatrist for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Boston and the author of two books that examine combat trauma through the lens of classical texts.

An Ancient Connection

The troubles and exploits of the returning war veteran represent a searing slice of reality. They have served as a recurring artistic theme throughout history - from Homer's "Odyssey" to the World War I novel "All Quiet on the Western Front," from the post-Vietnam-era movie "The Deer Hunter" to last fall's film "In the Valley of Elah."

At the heart of these tales lie warriors plagued by the kind of psychic wounds that have always afflicted some fraction of combat veterans. In an online course for health professionals, Capt. William P. Nash, the combat/operational stress control coordinator for the Marines, reaches back to Sophocles' account of Ajax, who slipped into a depression after the Trojan War, slaughtered a flock of sheep in a crazed state and then fell on his own sword.

The nature of the counterinsurgency war in Iraq, where there is no traditional front line, has amplified the stresses of combat, and multiple tours of duty - a third of the troops involved in Iraq and Afghanistan have deployed more than once - ratchet up those stresses.

In earlier eras, various labels attached to the psychological injuries of war: soldier's heart, shell shock, Vietnam disorder. Today the focus is on PTSD, but
military health care officials are seeing a spectrum of psychological issues, with an estimated half of the returning National Guard members, 38 percent of soldiers and 31 percent of marines reporting mental health problems, according to a Pentagon task force.

Decades of studies on the problems of Vietnam veterans have established links between combat trauma and higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, gun ownership, child abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse - and criminality. On a less scientific level, such links have long been known.

"The connection between war and crime is unfortunately very ancient," said Dr. Shay, the V.A. psychiatrist and author. "The first thing that Odysseus did after he left Troy was to launch a pirate raid on Ismarus. Ending up in trouble with the law has always been a final common pathway for some portion of psychologically injured veterans."

The National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study, considered the most thorough analysis of this population, found that 15 percent of the male veterans still suffered from full-blown post-traumatic stress disorder more than a decade after the war ended. Half of the veterans with active PTSD had been arrested or in jail at least once, and 34.2 percent more than once. Some 11.5 percent of them had been convicted of felonies, and veterans are more likely to have committed violent crimes than nonveterans, according to government studies. In the mid-1980s, with so many Vietnam veterans behind bars that Vietnam Veterans of America created chapters in prisons, veterans made up a fifth of the nation's inmate population.

As Iraq and Afghanistan veterans get enmeshed in the criminal justice system, former advocates for Vietnam veterans are disheartened by what they see as history repeating itself.

"These guys today, I recognize the hole in their souls," said Hector Villarreal, a criminal defense lawyer in Mission, Tex., who briefly represented a three-time Iraq combat veteran charged with manslaughter.

Brockton D. Hunter, a criminal defense lawyer in Minneapolis, told colleagues in a recent lecture at the Minnesota State Bar Association that society should try harder to prevent veterans from self-destructing.
"To truly support our troops, we need to apply our lessons from history and newfound knowledge about PTSD to help the most troubled of our returning veterans," Mr. Hunter said. "To deny the frequent connection between combat trauma and subsequent criminal behavior is to deny one of the direct societal costs of war and to discard another generation of troubled heroes."

'The Town Was Torn Up'

At the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution in Nebraska, Seth Strasburg, 29, displays an imposing, biker-style presence. He has a shaved head, bushy chin beard and tattoos scrolled around his thick arms and neck, one of which quotes, in Latin, a Crusades-era dictum: "Kill them all. God will know his own."

Beneath this fierce exterior, however, Mr. Strasburg, an Iraq combat veteran who pleaded no contest to manslaughter and gun charges in 2006, hides a tortured compulsion to understand his actions. Growing up in rural Nebraska, he read military history. Now he devours books like Lt. Col. Dave Grossman's "On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society" and Dr. Shay's "Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming."

Because Mr. Strasburg is introspective, he provides a window into the reverberations of combat violence within one veteran's psyche and from there outward. In Arnold, Neb., population 679, the unintentional killing last year by Mr. Strasburg of Thomas Tiffany Varney V, a pre-mortuary science major known as Moose, was a deeply unsettling event.

"To lose one young man permanently and another to prison, with Iraq mixed up in the middle of it - the town was torn up," said Pamela Eggleston, a waitress at Suzy's Pizza and Spirits.

In late 2005, Mr. Strasburg returned to Arnold for a holiday leave after two years in Iraq. Once home, he did not easily shed the extreme vigilance that had become second nature. He traveled around rural Nebraska with a gun and body armor in his Jeep, feeling irritable, out of sorts and out of place in tranquil, "American Idol"-obsessed America.

During his leave, he shrank from questions about Iraq
because he hated the cavalier ones: "So, did you kill anybody? What was it like?"

He had, in fact, killed somebody in Iraq and was having trouble dealing with it. Like several veterans interviewed, Mr. Strasburg was plagued by one death before he caused another one.

In 2004, Sergeant Strasburg's section was engaged in a mission to counter a proliferation of improvised explosive devices, or I.E.D.'s, on the road west of Mosul. One night, posted in an old junked bus, he watched the road for hours until an Iraqi man, armed and out after curfew, appeared and circled a field, kicking the dirt as if he were searching for something. Finally, the man bent down, straining to pick up a large white flour sack, which he then dragged toward the road.

"In my mind at the time, he had this I.E.D. hidden out there during the day and he was going to set it in place," Mr. Strasburg said. "We radioed it in. They said, 'Whatever, use your discretion.' So I popped him."

With others on his reconnaissance team, Mr. Strasburg helped zip the man into a body bag, taking a few minutes to study the face that he now cannot forget. When they went to search the flour sack, they found nothing but gravel.

"I reported the kill to the battalion," Mr. Strasburg said. "They said, you know: 'Good shot. It's legal. Whatever. Don't worry about it.' After that, it was never mentioned. But, you know, I had some issues with it later."

Mr. Strasburg's voice broke and he turned his head, wiping his eyes. A reporter noted that he was upset.

"I'm trying not to be," he said, then changed his mind. "I mean, how can you not be? If you're human. What if I had waited?"

"Maybe I was too eager," he added. "Maybe I wanted to be the first one to get a kill, you know? Maybe, maybe, maybe. And that will never go away."

Which bothers him, Mr. Strasburg said, telling himself: "Get over it. You shot somebody. Everybody else shot somebody, too."
Shortly after Mr. Strasburg's military tour of duty ended, he returned to Iraq as a private contractor because, he said, he did not know what else to do with himself after eight years in the Army. "I have no skill other than carrying a gun," he said.

By late 2005, home on leave, he was preparing to return once more to Iraq in January.

On New Year's Eve, Mr. Strasburg, accompanied by his brother, consumed vodka cocktails for hours at Jim's Bar and Package in Arnold. Toward evening's end, he engaged in an intense conversation with a Vietnam veteran, after which, he said, he inexplicably holstered his gun and headed to a party. Outside the party, he drunkenly approached a Chevrolet Suburban crowded with young people, got upset and thrust his gun inside the car.

Mr. Strasburg said he did not remember what provoked him. According to one account, a young man - not the victim - set him off by calling him a paid killer. Mr. Strasburg, according to the prosecutor, stuck his gun under the young man's chin. There was a struggle over the gun. It went off. And Mr. Varney, a strapping 21-year-old with a passion for hunting, car racing and baseball, was struck.

Asked if he pulled the trigger, Mr. Strasburg said, "I don't know," adding that he took responsibility: "It was my gun and I was drunk. But what the hell was I thinking?"

The Suburban drove quickly away. Mr. Strasburg jumped into his Jeep, speeding along wintry roads until he crashed into a culvert. Feeling doomed, he said, he donned his bulletproof vest and plunged into the woods, where he fell asleep in the snow as police helicopters and state troopers closed in on him.

Mr. Strasburg had never been screened for post-traumatic stress disorder. Like many soldiers, he did not take seriously the Army's mental health questionnaires given out at his tour's end. "They were retarded," he said.

"All of us were like, 'Let's do this quickly so we can go home.' They asked: 'Did you see any dead bodies? Did you take part in any combat operations?' Come on, we were in Iraq. They didn't even ask us the really important question, if you killed someone."

After his arrest, a psychologist hired by his family
diagnosed combat trauma in Mr. Strasburg, writing in an evaluation that post-traumatic stress disorder, exacerbated by alcohol, served as a "major factor" in the shooting.

A Judge's Harsh Words

At the sentencing hearing in Broken Bow, Neb., in September 2006, however, the judge discounted the centrality of the PTSD. He called Mr. Varney "the epitome of an innocent victim" and Mr. Strasburg "a bully" who "misconstrued comments" and "reacted in a belligerent and hostile manner." In a courtroom filled with Arnold townspeople and Iraq veterans, he sentenced Mr. Strasburg to 22 to 36 years in prison.

Mr. Strasburg's mother, Aneita, believing that the shooting was a product of his combat trauma, started an organization to create awareness about post-traumatic stress disorder.

Her activism, however, deeply offended the victim's parents, who run the Arnold Funeral Home.

"I'm sorry, but it feels like a personal affront, like she's trying to excuse our son's death with the war," Barb Varney said, adding that Mr. Strasburg has "never shown any remorse."

Thomas Tiffany Varney IV, the victim's father, expressed skepticism about Mr. Strasburg's PTSD and the disorder in general, saying, "His grandfather, my dad, a lot of people been there, done that, and it didn't affect them," Mr. Varney said. "They're trying to brush it away, 'Well, he murdered someone, it's just post-traumatic stress.'"

Mr. Strasburg himself, whose diagnosis was confirmed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, expressed discomfort with his post-traumatic stress disorder and its connection to his crime. "It's not a be-all-and-end-all excuse, and I don't mean it to be," he said.

As Mr. Strasburg prefers to see it, he had adapted his behavior to survive in Iraq and then retained that behavior - vigilant, distrustful, armed - when he returned home. "You need time to decompress," he said. "If the exact same circumstances had happened a year later" - the circumstances of that New Year's Eve - "nothing would have happened. It never would have went
Mr. Strasburg also voiced reluctance to being publicly identified as a PTSD sufferer, worried that his former military colleagues would see him as a weakling. "Nobody wants to be that guy who says, 'I got counseling this afternoon, Sergeant,' " he said, mimicking a whining voice.

Mr. Strasburg's former platoon leader, Capt. Benjamin D. Tiffner, who was killed in an I.E.D. attack in Baghdad in November, wrote a letter to Nebraska state authorities. He protested the length of the sentence and requested Mr. Strasburg's transfer "to a facility that would allow him to deal with his combat trauma."

"Seth has been asked and required to do very violent things in defense of his country," Captain Tiffner wrote. "He spent the majority of 2003 to 2005 in Iraq solving very dangerous problems by using violence and the threat of violence as his main tools. He was congratulated and given awards for these actions. This builds in a person the propensity to deal with life's problems through violence and the threat of violence."

"I believe this might explain in some way why Seth reacted the way that he did that night in Nebraska," the letter continued. "I'm not trying to explain away Seth's actions, but I think he is a special case and he needs to be taken care of by our judicial system and our medical system."

Many Don't Seek Treatment

Unlike during the Vietnam War, the current military has made a concerted effort, through screenings and research, to gauge the mental health needs of returning veterans. But gauging and addressing needs are different, and a Pentagon task force last year described the military mental health system as overburdened, "woefully" understaffed, inadequately financed and undermined by the stigma attached to PTSD.

Although early treatment might help veterans retain their relationships and avoid developing related problems like depression, alcoholism and criminal behavior, many do not seek or get such help. And this group of homicide defendants seems to be a prime example.
Like Mr. Strasburg, many of these veterans learned that they had post-traumatic stress disorder only after their arrests. And their mental health issues often went unevaluated even after the killings if they were pleading not guilty, if they did not have aggressive lawyers and relatives - or if they killed themselves first.

Of the 13 combat veterans in The Times database who committed murder-suicides, only two, as best as it can be determined, had psychological problems diagnosed by the military health care system after returning from war.

"The real tragedy in these veterans' case is that, where PTSD is a factor, it is highly treatable," said Lawrence W. Sherman, director of the Jerry Lee Center of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. "And when people are exposed to serious trauma and don't get it treated, it is a serious risk factor for violence."

At various times, the question of whether the military shares some blame for these killings gets posed. This occurs especially where the military knew beforehand of a combat veteran's psychological troubles, marital problems or history of substance abuse.

In some cases, the military sent service members with pre-existing problems - known histories of mental illness, drug abuse or domestic abuse - into combat only to find those problems exacerbated by the stresses of war. In other cases, they quickly discharged returning veterans with psychological or substance abuse problems, after which they committed homicides.

Perhaps no case has posed the question of military liability more bluntly than that of Lucas T. Borges, 25, a former private in the Marines whose victims are suing the United States government, maintaining that the military "had a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent Borges from harming others." The government is trying to get the claim dismissed.

Mr. Borges immigrated from Brazil at 14 and joined the Marines four years later. After spending six months in Iraq at the beginning of the war, he "came back different, like he was out of his mind," said his mother, Dina Borges, who runs a small cleaning business in Maryland.
Assigned on his return to a maintenance battalion at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Private Borges developed a taste for the ether used to start large internal combustion engines in winter.

Mr. Borges did have a history of marijuana use, which he disclosed to the Marines when he enlisted, said Jeffrey Weber, a lawyer who represented the victims until recently.

But inhaling ether, which produces both a dreamy high and impairment, was new to him, and his sister, Gabriela, a 20-year-old George Washington University student, believes that he developed the habit to relieve the anxiety that he brought home from war.

The Marines, aware of Mr. Borges's past drug use, also knew that he had developed an ether problem, but they never removed him from the job where he had ready access to his drug of choice, according to the lawsuit. They never offered him drug treatment, either, Mr. Borges's own lawyer said in court.

Four months after he returned from Iraq, military officials moved to discharge Private Borges when he was caught inhaling ether in his car. They impounded the car, which contained several canisters of the government's ether, and sent Mr. Borges, who threatened to kill himself, to the mental health ward of the base hospital.

"He was finally under the care of a psychiatrist, but they pulled him from that because he was a problem and they wanted to get rid of him," Mr. Weber said. "They processed him out, handed him the keys to his car, and his supervisor said, 'If you're not careful, you're going to kill somebody.'"

When Mr. Borges retrieved his 1992 Camaro, he discovered that the Marines had left their ether canisters inside - they did not have anywhere to store them, officials said - at trial - and immediately got high. He then drove east down the westbound lane of a state highway, slamming headfirst into the victims' car, killing 19-year-old Jamie Marie Lumsden, the daughter of a marine who served in Iraq, and seriously injuring four others.

Convicted of second-degree murder, Mr. Borges was sentenced to 24 to 32 years in prison.
Lost in Las Vegas

The Army has recently developed a course called "Battlemind Training," intended to help soldiers make the psychological transition back into civilian society. "In combat, the enemy is the target," the course material says. "Back home, there are no enemies."

This can be a difficult lesson to learn. Many soldiers and marines find themselves at war with their spouses, their children, their fellow service members, the world at large and ultimately themselves when they come home.

"Based on my experience, most of these veterans feel just terrible that they've caused this senseless harm," Dr. Shay said. "Most veterans don't want to hurt other people."

Matthew Sepi withdrew into himself on his return from Iraq.

A Navajo Indian who saw his hometown of Winslow, Ariz., as a dead end, Mr. Sepi joined the Army at 16, with a permission slip from his mother.

For a teenager without much life experience, the war in Iraq was mind-bending, and Mr. Sepi saw intense action. When his infantry company arrived in April 2003, it was charged with tackling resistant Republican Guard strongholds north of Baghdad.

"The war was supposedly over, except it wasn't," Mr. Sepi said. "I was a ground troop, with a grenade launcher attached to my M-16. Me and my buddies were the ones that assaulted the places. We went in the buildings and cleared the buildings. We shot and got shot at."

After a year of combat, Mr. Sepi returned to Fort Carson, Colo., where life seemed dull and regimented. The soldiers did not discuss their war experiences or their postwar emotions. Instead, they partied, Mr. Sepi said, and the drinking got him and others in trouble.

Arrested for under-age driving under the influence, he was ordered to complete drug and alcohol education and counseling. Shortly after that, he decided to leave the Army.

Feeling lost after his discharge "with a few little medals," he ended up moving to Las Vegas, a city that he did not know, with the friend of a friend. Broke, Mr.
Sepi settled in the Naked City, which is named for the showgirls who used to sunbathe topless there. After renting a roach-infested hole in the wall with an actual hole in the wall, he found jobs doing roadwork and making plastic juice bottles in a factory. Alone and lonely, he started feeling the effects of his combat experiences.

In Las Vegas, Mr. Sepi's alcohol counselor took him under his wing, recognizing war-related PTSD in his extreme jumpiness, adrenaline rushes, nightmares and need to drink himself into unconsciousness.

The counselor directed him to seek specialized help from a Veterans Affairs hospital. Mr. Sepi said he called the V.A. and was told to report in person. But working 12-hour shifts at a bottling plant, he failed to do so.

In July 2005, when Mr. Sepi was arrested, he identified himself as an Iraq veteran. But, Detective Andersen said, "He didn't act like a combat veteran. He acted like a scared kid."

Soon afterward, Nancy Lemcke, Mr. Sepi's public defender, visited him in jail. "I asked him about PTSD," Ms. Lemcke said. "And he starts telling me about Iraq and all of a sudden, his eyes well up with tears, and he cries out: 'We had the wrong house! We had the wrong house!' And he's practically hysterical."

As part of an operation to break down the resistance in and around Balad, Mr. Sepi and his unit had been given a nightly list of targets for capture. Camouflaged, the American soldiers crept through towns after midnight, working their way down the lists, setting off C-4 plastic explosives at each address to stun the residents into submission.

"This particular night, it was December 2003, there was, I'd say, more than 100 targets," Mr. Sepi said. "Each little team had a list. And at this one house, we blow the gate and find out that there's this guy sitting in his car just inside that gate. We move in, and he, like, stumbles out of his car, and he's on fire, and he's, like, stumbling around in circles in his front yard. So we all kind of don't know what to do, and he collapses, and we go inside the house and search it and find out it's the wrong house."

Although Mr. Sepi said that he felt bad at the time, he...
also knew that he had done nothing but follow orders and
that the Army had paid the man's family a settlement. He
did not imagine that the image of the flaming, stumbling
Iraqi civilian would linger like a specter in his
psyche.

Listening to Mr. Sepi recount the story of a death that
he regretted in Iraq while grappling with a death that
he regretted in Las Vegas, his lawyer grew determined to
get him help. "It was just so shocking, and his emotions
were so raw, and he was so messed up," Ms. Lemcke said.

An Unusual Legal Deal

She found compassion for him among the law enforcement
officials handling the case. The investigation backed up
Mr. Sepi's story of self-defense, although it was never
determined who fired first. It made an impression on the
police that he was considerably outweighed - his 130
pounds against a 210-pound man and a 197-pound woman.
And it helped Mr. Sepi that his victims were drifters,
with no family members pressing for justice.

The police said that Kevin Ratcliff, 36, who was shot
and wounded by Mr. Sepi, belonged to the Crips and was a
convicted felon; Sharon Jackson, 47, who was killed,
belonged to NC, the Naked City gang, and an autopsy
found alcohol, cocaine and methamphetamines in her
blood.

Buoyed by an outpouring of support from Mr. Sepi's
fellow soldiers and veterans' advocates, Ms. Lemcke
pressed the Department of Veterans Affairs to find
treatment programs for Mr. Sepi. This allowed an unusual
deal with the local district attorney's office: in
exchange for the successful completion of treatment for
substance abuse and PTSD, the charges against Mr. Sepi
would be dropped.

After about three months in jail, Mr. Sepi spent three
months at a substance abuse program in Prescott, Ariz.,
in late 2005, where the graying veterans presented an
object lesson: "I don't want to be like that when I'm
older," he said to himself. In early 2006, he
transferred to a PTSD treatment center run by the V.A.
in Topeka, Kan., where he learned how to deal with
anger, sadness and guilt, to manage the symptoms of his
anxiety disorder and, it seems, to vanquish his
nightmares.
"For some reason, my bad dreams went away," he said.
"It's pretty cool."

Free to start life over, Mr. Sepi stepped tentatively into adulthood. Settling in Phoenix, he enrolled in automotive school and got a job as a welder for a commercial bakery. Once in a while, he said, a loud noise still starts his heart racing and he breaks into a cold sweat, ready for action. But he knows now how to calm himself, he said, he no longer owns guns, and he is sober and sobered by what he has done.

"That night," he said, of the hot summer night in Las Vegas when he was arrested for murder, "if I could erase it, I would. Killing is part of war, but back home ..."

Research was contributed by Alain Delaquérière, Amy Finnerty, Teddy Kider, Andrew Lehren, Renwick McLean, Jenny Nordberg and Margot Williams.

www.meetingresistance.com

FILM: POETRY SPEAKS AGAINST WAR AND FEAR-MONGERING

We are producers of the award winning Independent Film Committing Poetry in Times of War. This cutting edge film inspires people with its powerful mix of slam poetry, social activism, teacher rights, youth voice and the power of our fundamental freedoms. It won the award for Best Social Justice film at the Taos Mountain Film Festival, has been nominated for Best Documentary in South Africa, screened at the Film for the People festival in Canada, been highlighted in Christopher Coppola's People Accessible Hollywood Festival, and been an official selection at several other festivals, including the International Global Peace Film Festival. The film involves student and teacher free expression as well as presentation of creative poetry.

Faced with the opportunity to turn it over to a distributor and lose control over its important organizing potential, we have instead taken on a bold independent grassroots distribution path. As an organization that supports global peace and social justice, we believe that The Omni Center for Peace, Justice and Ecology is an ideal organization to host a screening of Committing Poetry. It can serve as both an important community event, an educational presentation, and also be a fundraiser to assist local and/or global organizations. [If you would like to make this happen, contact Gladys Tiffany.]

Committing Poetry graphically displays the weeks around the start of the Iraq War, wherein teachers were removed or fired for their support of student voice, police attacked peaceful protestors who dared challenge the war, and the national police practice of free speech zones – free speech in a box- became the norm. Yet, despite this climate, the film displays the power of creativity and the core of what it means to "commit poetry." It shows how a series of unifying events such as poetry slams, music venues, and vibrant youth groups, together dubbed "Poetic Justice," focused communities in supporting our 1St amendment rights and civil liberties while helping defy the fear–tactics and divisiveness sweeping the nation.

Our production company, Ubuntuworks, is committed to having Committing Poetry reaching as many people as possible. We are spreading the word to teachers' associations, unions, peace organizations, poetry groups, schools, and the media in your area. Downloadable templates provide easy posters, e-cards and images that can help you with your outreach; we also have contacts and ideas for underwriting the screening fees or costs so that all ticket sales can go directly to your group. In the end we hope for an exciting screening event that will educate, empower, and inspire everyone to find their voice and live from their creative center!

Check out our website at www.committingpoetry.com and see what people are saying about it in the attached material. Also, read about our production company's commitment to peace and social justice at www.ubuntuworks.com We look forward to
Sincerely,  Mia Chiaromonte, Mara Jackson, Distribution Team  
Mara@ubuntuworks.com, www.committingpoetry.com; www.ubuntuworks.com

**PHONING CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES**

I found a Website that claims to allow one person to target an entire congressional committee over the phone. [http://www.committeecaller.com/](http://www.committeecaller.com/)

CommitteeCaller.com is a site that allows one person to target an entire congressional committee over the phone. The web application utilizes the open source Asterisk PBX system to connect you to every senator or house member on a particular committee. No more digging around the 'net entering zip-codes to retrieve phone numbers of representatives -- CommitteeCaller.com automates the tedium of repetitively dialing your favorite politicians.

Select a committee, enter in your phone number and click "Put me in touch with democracy!" and you'll be called by our system and sequentially patched through to the front office of each member on that committee. You can even rate how each call went -- information that will enable us to rank representatives on how accountable and responsive they are to their constituents.

For more information about how Committee Caller works, click [here](http://www.committeecaller.com/).

To begin, follow these steps:

1. Select the committee you wish to target on the left. (Selecting a fictional committee will redirect all calls to Fandango, but will demonstrate the system's functionality.)
2. Enter your phone number below.
3. Press 'Put me in touch with democracy!'
4. Wait for Committee Caller's automated voice application to call you.
5. Pick up the phone and stay on the line while Committee Caller starts connecting you to the members on the committee you selected.

Once connected Committee Caller will tell you which representative you are calling, who their legislative director or chief of staff is, and what district they represent. At any point you can use the * to hang up the call and move on to the next one. After each call you will have the opportunity to rate how your call went.

**TAKE ACTION**

**SENATOR LINCOLN**  (202) 224-4843  Fax: (202) 228-1371.  
Fayetteville office:  251-1380

**Senator Mark Pryor**  Phone:  (202) 224-2353  Fax:  (202) 228-0908

**CONGRESSMAN Boozman**  Lowell office:  479-725-0400.

DC address:  1708 Longworth House Office Bldng., Washington, DC 20515; 202-225-4301.

HISTORY PRECEDING BUSH:  CLINTON  (US Empire is Bipartisan)
Iraq's WMD Myth: Why Clinton is Culpable: More evidence of the continuity in Iraq policy between Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Ed Herman

B. Why Clinton is Culpable/B. Iraq's WMD Myth, By ANDREW COCKBURN

A former senior UN diplomat has revealed to me details of how, just over 10 years ago, the Clinton administration deliberately sabotaged UN weapons inspections in Iraq.

American officials were fearful that Iraq would be officially certified as weapons-free, a development that was seen as a political liability for Bill Clinton. Thus the stage was set for the manufacture of the Iraqi WMD myth as the excuse for George Bush's catastrophic invasion of Iraq.

It was March 1997. For six years the UN inspectors had been probing the secrets of Saddam's weapons programs, in the process destroying huge quantities of chemical munitions and other production facilities. To enforce Saddam's cooperation, Iraq was subject to crushing sanctions.

Now, Rolf Ekeus, the urbane Swedish diplomat who headed the inspection effort, was ready to announce that his work was almost done. "I was getting close to certifying that Iraq was in compliance with Resolution 687," he confirmed to me recently.

At the time, he declared that although there were some loose ends to be cleared up, "not much is unknown about Iraq's retained proscribed weapons capabilities."

For the Clinton administration, this was a crisis. If Ekeus was allowed to complete his mission, then the suspension of sanctions would follow almost automatically.

Saddam would be off the hook and, more importantly for the Clintonites, the neo-conservative republicans would be howling for the president's blood.

The only hope was somehow to prevent Ekeus completing his mission.

Enter Madeleine Albright, newly appointed Secretary of State. On March 26, 1997, she strode on to the stage at Georgetown University to deliver what was billed as a major policy address on Iraq. Many in the audience expected that she would extend some sort of olive branch toward the Iraqi regime, but that was far from her mind.

Instead, she was set on making sure that Saddam effectively ended his cooperation with the inspectors. "We do not agree with the nations who argue that if Iraq complies with its obligations concerning weapons of mass destruction, sanctions should be lifted," she declared. Sanctions, she stated without equivocation, would remain unless or until Saddam was driven from power.

Ekeus understood immediately what Albright intended. "I knew that Saddam would now feel that there was no point in his cooperating with us, and that was the intent of her speech."

Sure enough, the following day he got an angry call from Tariq Aziz, Saddam's deputy prime minister and emissary to the outside world. "He wanted to know why Iraq should work with us any more."

From then on, the inspectors found their lives increasingly difficult, as Iraqi officials, clearly acting under instructions from Saddam, blocked them at every turn. Ekeus resigned in July 1997, to be replaced by the Australian Richard Butler. Butler was soon embroiled in acrimonious confrontation with the Iraqis. Later the following year, all the inspectors were withdrawn from Iraq and the US mounted a series of bombing raids.

Clinton's strategy had been successful. Iraq remained under sanctions, while in Washington the neo-conservative faction spun the wildest conjectures as to what evil schemes Saddam, unmolested by inspectors, might be concocting with his weapons scientists.
In fact Saddam had long abandoned all his WMD programs, but as the CIA had no sources of intelligence inside Iraq, no one in the West could prove this.

Finally, following 9/11, the war party in George Bush Jr's administration was able to make the case for invasion on the grounds that Saddam had refused to comply with UN resolutions on disarmament by refusing to grant access to the weapons inspectors. The Iraq disaster has many fathers. [Refutable?]

[Footnote: Ekeus knew from the mid-1990s on that Saddam Hussein had no such weapons of mass destruction. They had all been destroyed years earlier, after the first Gulf war.

Ekeus learned this on the night of August 22, 1995, in Amman, from the lips of General Hussein Kamel, who had just defected from Iraq, along with some of his senior military aides. Kamel was Saddam's son-in-law and had been in overall charge of all programs for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

That night, in three hours of detailed questioning from Ekeus and two technical experts, Kamel was categorical. The UN inspection teams had done a good job. When Saddam was finally persuaded that failure to dispose of the relevant weapons systems would have very serious consequences, he issued the order and Kamel carried it out. As he told Ekeus that night, "All weapons, biological, chemical, missile, nuclear, were destroyed." (The UNSCOM record of the session can be viewed at http://www.fair.org/press-releases/kamel.pdf). In similar debriefings that August Kamel said the same thing to teams from the CIA and MI6. His military aides provided a wealth of corroborative details. Then, the following year, Kamel was lured back to Iraq and at once executed. Editors.]

Andrew Cockburn is the author of Rumsfeld: His Rise, Fall and Catastrophic Legacy.

IRAQ WAR IN ARKANSAS NEWSPAPERS

I grabbed a pile of clips from the top of my collection from ADG, NAT, and TMN.

You are welcome to my collections, if you wish to do your own research. WE, THE PEOPLE to resist and change the US Warfare State/Militarized Economy..

The clips seemed to fall topically into 3 main groups:

Pro-war, Consequences of the War, Dissent

PRO-WAR

Many items presented this point of view.

CONSEQUENCES/COSTS OF THE WAR (some 60 clips mainly from late 07, plus 11 “Casualties of War” editorials from TMN; citing one or two examples of each) )

1. Civilian Casualties (see Security Firms)
   “Marine’s Murder Case” (ADG 10-5-07, 13A), Sgt. Frank Wuterich, charged with unpremeditated murder of 17 Iraqis in Haditha (2 women, 5 children), was recommended to be tried only for negligent homicide; “Bombardment Excessive, Iraqis Claim” (TMN 10-13-07), airstrike killed est. 15 civilians; “Our Unknown Air War Over Iraq” (NAT 1-2-08, p. A4: Bush has long intended to ensure oil via air war, thus the “air war is intensifying. The U.S. dropped five times as many bombs in Iraq during the first six months of 2007 as it did in the first half of 2006.”

2. Refugees
   “Millions Displaced” (ADG 11-6-07): “Iraq’s displace population has grown to 2.3 million people….about two-thirds…children under 12.” (one or two reports);

3. US Soldier Casualties
   “Wounded Return: Disfigured Veterans Highlight Health-Care Issues” (TMN 6-24-07), 1st in AP series on numbers, the wounds, long-term prospects; “Brain Injuries Daunt Vets” (TMN 9-10-07).(many reports)

4. Squandered Resources
“Bush” (*ADG* 10-23-07, 3A), $196.4 billion for Iraq and Afghan. beginning Oct. 1, 2007 for day to
day ops; “Cost of War Measured in Lives Spent” (*TMN* edit. 11-14-08): Congress’ Joint Economic
Committee’s report on costs or Iraq and Afghan. wars now “about $1.6 trillion, plus countless
hidden costs; “Wars’ Cost: $20,900 A Family (*ADG* 11-14-07)
Releases 500 in Iraq: Brimming Detention Camps Still Hold 25,800 Suspects” (*ADG* (11-9-07):
released Jumaa Khashan was “arrested in 2005 on his wat to visit relatives”; (not many reports on
this)
6. Torture
“War, Values Conflict” (Brummett, *TMN*): “We took over a prison…and behaved as
psychopaths….”; “Court Rebuffs Torture Case” (*TMN* 10-10-07), US Supreme Court rejects
Khaled el-Masri case. (very few reports during this period)
6. Corruption and Killings by Private Security Firms

“Security Guards Kill Two” (*TMN* 10-10-07); “Report Pieces Together Blackwater Shooting” (17
civilians)(*TMN*10-9-07); ref: :The Great Iraq Swindle” by Matt Taibbi, *Rolling Stone* (Sept. 6, 2007); 
7. Corruption of Iraqi Officials

“Anti-Mafia Police Tie Arms Deal to Iraqi Officials” (*ADG* (8-13, 2007)(very few reports).
DISSENT (25 to 30 clips, mainly from late 07; I’ll cite a few examples of each)
1. Majority of Democrats but Not Enough in Congress

“Republicans Now Own War, Democrats Charge” (*TMN* 9-21-07). “Senate Democrats defiantly
charged ahead Thursday with legislation ordering troops home from Iraq, still lacking the votes to
win…” The article focuses on Majority Leader Reid’s efforts, with Sen. Carl Levin and Sen.
Feingold, to order combat troops home within 9 months by cutting off funding. “Senate Democrats
Unable to Rally Necessary Votes” (*TMN* (9-21-07).
I don’t feel Dems. have tried hard enough to leave Iraq, or there are plenty of proponents of armed
violence in the Dems.. For example, a Reid-Feingold bill to cut off funding in June 2008 failed 28 for
and 70 against. While cong. GOP is solidly for war, the cong. Dem. and Dem. Party in general are
not an anti-war party. In order to override Bush’s veto the Senate must have the support of 67 of 100
Senators and 290 of 435 Representatives, and they don’t have it. Also, the Repubs. have initiated
hundreds of filibusters to stop Dem. bills .
2. Majority of Public
In contrast, the majority of the public oppose the war and want the soldiers home, and are “angry
with…Bush for continuing the war” and “angry with Democrats for not mustering enough votes to
3. About Half the Diplomats

“Diplomats Disagree with Iraq Policy” (*TMN* 1-9-08). “Nearly half of U.S. diplomats unwilling to
volunteer to work in Iraq say one reason…is they don’t agree with Bush…policies....”
4. Some Clergy (surely many more than have spoken out)

5. Some Journalists (not mainstream)

7-14-07). Also:George Arnold (*ADG*), Donald Kaul (**NAT**, Minuteman ), Daniel Smith (**NAT*,
Minuteman).
11-25-07).
7. Soldiers: “Army Desertion Rate Climbs 42% in Year” *(ADG 11-17-07)*. “Overall, 4,698 soldiers deserted this year, compared to 3,301 last year.” But article also discusses the many more soldiers who left the army for physical fitness problems, personality/mental problems, declaring themselves to be gay.

*Don’t whine or rant, speak cant: take action, organize!!*

**SENATOR LINCOLN** (202) 224-4843 Fax: (202) 228-1371.
Fayetteville office: 251-1380

Senator Mark Pryor: Phone: (202) 224-2353 Fax: (202) 228-0908

**CONGRESSMAN Boozman** Lowell office: 479-725-0400.
DC address: 1708 Longworth House Office Bldng., Washington, DC 20515; 202-225-4301.

Dick Bennett  
jbennet@uark.edu
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703