Two kinds of violence disrupt the harmony of our world: physical and structural. This newsletter is part of OMNI’s NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT, by which we counter the structural conditioning for violence and wars in such celebrations as Columbus Day and Armed Forces Day. These national days of violence reinforce the national drive for wars, for invasions and interventions—some fifty since WWII, amounting to permanent war—examined by William Blum in Killing Hope and Rogue Nation and by Richard Rubenstein in his book Reasons to Kill: Why Americans Choose War (2010). Rubenstein analyzes seven “key rationales for war” employed by successive governments to gain public support for military action.

(The other half of the Project is the affirmation of nonviolent DAYS, such as United Nations DAY, Human Rights DAY, by which we strive for the goals of equity and health and protection of all species and a world free of war and the threat of war.)

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http://www.veteransforpeace.org/pressroom/news/2012/05/25/memorial-day--pick-your-perversion

May 25, 2012

Memorial Day, originally known as “Decoration Day,” was created in the aftermath of the Civil War as a day to honor the memory and sacrifice of Union soldiers who had died in battle. It later broadened to include the theme of reconciliation, honoring Confederate soldiers as well; and through the years has become a day to remember all U.S. military personnel who have died in combat. Increasingly, it evolved from simply decorating the graves and solemn memorialization of those killed, to opportunities for flag-waving, nationalistic displays with parades, marching bands and political speeches. Today, it has become a perversion of its original intent in two ways.

Perversion #1—Commercialism/Consumerism/Entertainment

Nearly all American holidays have been transformed from their original intents and into opportunities for economic profits, and Memorial Day is arguably the best example. Memorial Day has turned into Memorial Day weekend—a time for shopping, watching the Indianapolis 500, and kicking-off the summer.

Adding superficial, “patriotic” gimmickry to advertising must work because it is ubiquitous. In this ad, the images on the left are saluting with the wrong hand—but accuracy doesn’t matter as long as it’s red, white and blue; advertisers know what works with American consumers.

In another example of patriotic pandering, Heinz has outdone itself in their appreciation for veterans… nothing says “thank you” quite the way condiments do. The truly patriotic American will be using nothing but Heinz ketchup at their Memorial Day BBQ!

Perversion #2—American Exceptionalism

This perversion of Memorial Day is typified by the glorification of war and everyone who participated in it. God is always on our side (which means we are always right). Politicians try to outdo each other in their effusive thanks for the military, and refer to everyone who has ever worn a military uniform as a hero. God, guns and glory are wrapped up in the flag, and the whole package is given the credit for all that is good: liberty, freedom, justice, and the American Way of Life. Perversion #2 is of much more concern because of the ideology that it represents.
It is very dangerous when the people of a nation believes it can do no wrong; that it can operate outside of international law; and that God is on its side. Because when a nation is so confident in its righteousness, it loses any capacity for objectivity. On Memorial Day we remember the American war dead, but never question the necessity for the battle. We cannot bear to think that American lives lost in war might have been in vain, and so we continue to insist that we are on the side of right. We never second guess our country, because if we come to the realization that the war is wrong, for whatever reason, then we have to accept responsibility for all of those killed in our wars—not just our own. In the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, that seems way outside the capacity of the American public, who are only now starting to question whether the sacrifice of more U.S. troops is “worth it.” We have not even thought to question whether the sacrifice of Iraqis and Afghans is worth it—more than 90% of whom were non-combatants. The media is starting to describe us as “war weary” but we haven’t the slightest clue.

On this Memorial Day, Veterans For Peace asks you to mourn not only for Americans killed in battle, but also for those killed by Americans in battle. We ask you to be willing to accept the fact that these war deaths did not have to happen—that they are actually in vain. Hundreds of thousands of innocent people have died in American wars of aggression. That is a tragedy and is a truth that must be accepted and for which we must take responsibility.

Leah Bolger

Bio: Leah Bolger spent 20 years on active duty in the U.S. Navy and retired in 2000 at the rank of Commander. She is currently a full-time peace activist and serves as the National President of Veterans For Peace. leah@veteransforpeace.org

May 24, 2012
Tomgram: Engelhardt, The Road to Amnesia

[Note for TomDispatch Readers: The next TD post will be on Tuesday morning May 29th. To catch Timothy MacBain’s latest Tomcast audio interview in which I discuss what Americans should consider remembering on Memorial Day, click here or download it to your iPod here. Tom]

How to Forget on Memorial Day: Whistling Past the Graveyard of Empires
By Tom Engelhardt

It’s the saddest reading around: the little announcements that dribble out of the Pentagon every day or two -- those terse, relatively uninformative death notices: rank; name; age; small town, suburb, or second-level city of origin; means of death (“small arms fire,” “improvised explosive device,” “the result of gunshot wounds inflicted by an individual wearing an Afghan National Army uniform,” or sometimes something vaguer like “while conducting combat operations,” “supporting Operation Enduring Freedom,” or simply no explanation at all); and the unit the dead soldier belonged to. They are seldom 100 words, even with the usual opening line: “The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.” Sometimes they include more than one death. They are essentially bureaucratic notices designed to draw little attention to themselves. Yet cumulatively, in their hundreds over the last decade, they represent a grim archive of America’s still ongoing, already largely forgotten second Afghan War, and I’ve read them obsessively for years.
Into the Memory Hole
May is the official month of remembrance when it comes to our war dead, ending as it does on the long Memorial Day weekend when Americans typically take to the road and kill themselves and each other in far greater numbers than will die in Afghanistan. It’s a weekend for which the police tend to predict rising fatalities and news reports tend to celebrate any declines in deaths on our roads and highways. Quiz Americans and a surprising number undoubtedly won’t have thought about the “memorial” in Memorial Day at all -- especially now that it’s largely a marker of the start of summer and an excuse for cookouts. How many today are aware that, as Decoration Day, it began in 1865 in a nation still torn by grief over the loss of -- we now know -- up to 750,000 dead in the first modern war, a wrenching civil catastrophe in a then-smaller and still under-populated country? How many know that the first Decoration Day was held in 1865 with 10,000 freed slaves and some Union soldiers parading on a Charleston, South Carolina, race track previously frequented by planters and transformed in wartime into a grim outdoor prison? The former slaves were honoring Union prisoners who had died there and been hastily buried in unmarked graves, but as historian Kenneth Jackson has written, they were also offering “a declaration of the meaning of the war and of their own freedom.”

Now Available on YouTube
Sir! No Sir! Do something significant for Memorial Day and watch this important film on GI resistance during the Vietnam war starring a number of vfp members.
https://www.youtube.com/user/DisplacedFilms/featured
IVAW, We Take Our Stand film, Iraqi Winter Soldier
https://www.youtube.com/user/DisplacedFilms/featured

Amy Goodman, “Memorial Day: Honor the Dead, Heal the Wounded, Stop the Wars,” Amy Goodman, Op-Ed, NationofChange, May 24, 2012: Gen. John Allen, commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan, spoke Wednesday at the Pentagon, four stars on each shoulder, his chest bedecked with medals. Allen said the NATO summit in Chicago, which left him feeling “heartened,” “was a powerful signal of international support for the Afghan-led process of reconciliation.” Unlike Allen, many decorated U.S. military veterans left the streets of Chicago after the NATO summit without their medals. They marched on the militarized convention center where the generals and heads of state had gathered and threw their medals at the high fence surrounding the summit. READ | DISCUSS | SHARE
http://www.nationofchange.org/memorial-day-honor-dead-heal-wounded-stop-wars-1337875243

Dear james,
This Memorial Day weekend, please take a minute to watch "No NATO, No War".
It’s the most moving and important part of the week of actions related to the NATO summit in Chicago last week, an event that drew generals, diplomats and activists to struggle over the future of the military alliance, Afghanistan and the dominant narrative that makes war the core of every policy.

AFSC and our partners worked hard to make sure coverage of this historic event included the need to retire NATO, to stop spending money on war, and to fund our communities. After a strenuous media campaign millions heard or read our message in media outlets on television, radio, online, and in print.

With our partners at Peace Action and the Network for a NATO Free Future, our Counter-Summit brought together more than 300 peace activists from across the country and around the world, including Germany, Greece, Britain, France, Sweden, Ireland, and Mexico.

The conference helped build the movement for complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan and to move the money from Pentagon spending to meeting human needs. It also began to deepen people's understandings of NATO as an aggressive global military alliance focused on securing resources. We cast light on NATO war preparations and their impacts on our communities.

The week ended with an historic march led by Iraq Vets Against the War and Afghans for Peace. Nearly 50 veterans threw away their medals in a moving ceremony that was largely ignored by the mainstream media.

This Memorial Day weekend show your respect for the veterans who had the courage to say yes to life and no to war. Take the time to watch the ceremony and send this link to your friends.

http://www.democracynow.org/2012/5/21/no_nato_no_war_us_veterans

Wage Peace,
Peter Lems and Mary Zerkel
American Friends Service Committee


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War at What Cost? A Veteran Perspective

May 23, 2012  (via VFP)

This coming fiscal year, the United States is set to spend more than $640 billion dollars on the Pentagon and war, accounting for more than 60 percent of federal domestic spending. In excess of $85 billion of that will be spent on the war in Afghanistan alone.

This unfathomable amount of money was approved by the House of Representatives in the National Defense Authorization Act. These funds will serve to bring suffering and pain to innocent people, further militarize the world and undermine peace and stability for generations to come—all on the
backs of those who struggle at home.

In the backdrop of such spending, we’re told that we’re in a financial crisis. Elected officials tell us it is time to make tough choices. There isn’t enough money for programs like “Meals on Wheels” and for ensuring everyone has access to adequate healthcare. Our schools and bridges must wait to be repaired. New roads and schools must remain unconstructed.

Yet some of us know better.

Last weekend in Chicago, dignitaries from around the world met for the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Summit on Afghanistan. U.S. veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also gathered to march in protest and return our military medals to NATO. The demands were simple: No NATO, No War. Thousands joined the veterans to march to the NATO meeting location. One by one, nearly 50 of us returned our medals. Removing one medal from his chest at a time, Aaron Hughes of Iraq Veterans Against the War summed it up well when he pulled the final medal from his old military uniform: “And this one is because I’m sorry.”

As veterans, we know the cost of war firsthand. Many of us—myself included—have lost friends to death in combat, by suicide and to addiction. Rates of divorce, addiction, suicide and homelessness are at record highs among U.S. veterans. We know firsthand the stories of the widowed and divorced, the broken and the damned. We have watched friends fall apart and sometimes we’ve fallen apart ourselves. We have seen the pain on the faces of the victims of bombs made under the auspices of American jobs. We have watched as the light of humanity seemed to flicker out in the face of dehumanizing war. And many of us have left pieces of ourselves—physical, mental and emotional—in the places we’ve served.

What exactly is the benefit of spending so much on preparing for and making war? Does it really enhance our liberty and freedom? Do we really feel safer? I can’t take more than ten steps without being on some kind of camera these days. I’m constantly reminded to be vigilant as I take public transportation here in Washington, DC. Is it silly that our government is spending nearly two-thirds of the discretionary budget on “defense” and they’re relying on me to phone a hotline if I see something suspicious?

Mine aren’t the only eyebrows rising. In the years that I’ve been a pro-peace advocate since my honorable discharge from the U.S. Army in 2004, people seem to be getting the message like never before. As we marched in formation, the Chicago police lined the perimeter of the parade route. I wondered as I marched how many of them have felt recent budget cuts or watched colleagues get laid off. At one point, while chanting “Troops need healthcare, not more warfare” an officer alongside us chanted “Police need healthcare, not more warfare.” Others joined in and we picked it up. It was one of those rare moments in which we actually knew the message was reaching someone.

My hope is that more people start to receive this message. There are choices to be made. Right now, the people making these choices are not doing so in a representative way. Congress cannot continue to fund wars and weapons on the backs of the poor, elderly and shrinking middle class. Building a just and equitable society means human needs must take first priority. There is enough money; how we choose to spend it is the question.

**Matt Southworth** is Legislative Associate on Foreign Policy for the Friends Committee on National
Legislation.

TAKE ACTION: TELL FORT HOOD COMMANDER TO ORDER STAND DOWN THIS MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR IVAW

Dear James,

Tell General Campbell to put soldier care first.

This **Memorial Day weekend** marks one year since our Operation Recovery Campaign has been at Fort Hood, Texas. In that time, we've talked with hundreds of soldiers about their problems accessing mental health care. We've learned that there are a number of factors that inhibit care, and we are focusing on two big issues that are common concerns among soldiers:

1) **Commanders routinely override or ignore the medical treatment plans (also known as medical "profiles") that soldiers get from their doctors.**

2) **Commanders regularly stigmatize soldiers who seek care through public humiliation or creating an environment of intimidation that discourages soldiers from speaking up for their own well being.**

Help us tell Fort Hood Commander, General Campbell, to put soldiers' health and safety first.

These are systemic problems, even though General Campbell has policies in place that specifically prohibit such behavior by commanders. **But many soldiers don't know that these policies exist, and they clearly are not being enforced.** Lower commanders are not held accountable for respecting soldiers' rights to heal.

**We are calling on General Campbell to hold a Safety Stand Down across Fort Hood.** A Safety Stand Down is a day where all work activity ceases in order to focus on training and education about the safety and well being of service members.

Help us make this a priority for the General.

Send an email or call and tell him to put soldier care first by having a Safety Stand Down at Fort Hood.

With the epidemic of depression, suicide, and substance use, it's time to address these concerns across the Fort Hood community. Holding a Safety Stand Down would provide an opportunity to educate service members and commanders alike about the policies in place to support soldiers' rights to heal, and would signal that General Campbell takes these issues seriously.

Today, the Operation Recovery Campaign will stand at Fort Hood's east gate to let soldiers know about
their rights to access mental health care. Will you help cover the costs of the materials needed for their action? Just $400 will cover their costs. **Can you chip in $3 or more? Make sure to write "Safety" in the Special Project box.**

Many thanks to Under the Hood, the pro-soldier, anti-war cafe and outreach center, for making today's action possible.

And thank you for your ongoing support. Our progress at Fort Hood would not be possible without it!

In Solidarity, The Operation Recovery Team

**PERMANENT WAR**

*War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* by Mary L. Dudziak

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**Description**

When is wartime? On the surface, it is a period of time in which a society is at war. But we now live in what President Obama has called "an age without surrender ceremonies," as the Administration announced an "end to conflict in Iraq," even though conflict on the ground is ongoing. It is no longer easy to distinguish between wartime and peacetime. In this inventive meditation on war, time, and the law, Mary Dudziak argues that wartime is not as discrete a time period as we like to think. Instead, America has been engaged in some form of ongoing overseas armed conflict for over a century. Meanwhile policy makers and the American public continue to view wars as exceptional events that eventually give way to normal peace times. This has two consequences. First, because war is thought to be exceptional, "wartime" remains a shorthand argument justifying extreme actions like torture and detention without trial. Second, ongoing warfare is enabled by the inattention of the American people. More disconnected than ever from the wars their nation is fighting, public disengagement leaves us without political restraints on the exercise of American war powers.

Visit [http://wartimebook.blogspot.com/](http://wartimebook.blogspot.com/) to learn more.

**Reviews**

"*War Time* turns our notions of both 'war' and 'time' upside down. This thought-provoking book forces us to realize that war is not an exception to 'normal' peacetime, but rather that wartime has become the norm. The implications of perpetual wartime are profound, for law, politics, and daily life. Mary Dudziak has again brought her keen cultural, historical and legal insights to bear on a subject of critical importance."--Elaine Tyler May, Regents Professor, University of Minnesota

"Taking law as her focal point but ranging much more widely, Mary Dudziak's provocative meditation on what we mean in speaking of a 'time' of war invites readers to reflect on how we think about war itself. It should change our understanding of what-and when-war 'is' for Americans."--Mark Tushnet, William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law, Harvard Law School

"*War Time* is one of those rare books that can entirely reorient how one thinks about the world. By showing the reader what Americans have meant-and have come to mean-by 'wartime,' Mary Dudziak shows us assumptions about war and peace that govern political and legal thought without anyone noticing. This is an intellectual tour de force, and beautifully written to boot."--H. Jefferson Powell, George Washington Law School

"A slim and engaging volume, wonderfully written and carefully wrought, *War Time* is a fascinating meditation on the perils of clinging to a myth of national identity that increasingly bears only a glancing resemblance to modern
"Mary Dudziak's new book, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences*, is a crucial document. Her smooth foray into legal and political history reveals that in not just the past decade but the past century, wartime has become a more or less permanent feature of the American experience, though we fail to recognize it. ..

Dudziak assembles an intellectual Rubik's Cube, playing with ideas of time, law, killing and politics, and arranging them into a pattern that all but eliminates the distinctions we long assumed to have existed between war and peace." --*The Nation*

"For over a decade since 9/11, U.S. forces have been waging war. Yet is the nation itself 'at war'? In this timely and provocative book, Mary Dudziak shows why this question has become so difficult to answer-and warns of the dangers inherent in our failure to do so." --Andrew J. Bacevich, author of *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War*

**Mary L. Dudziak** is Judge Edward J. and Ruey L. Guirado Professor of Law, History and Political Science at the University of Southern California Law School. Her books include *Exporting American Dreams: Thurgood Marshall's African Journey* and *Cold War Civil Rights*.

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**FROM VETERANS FOR PEACE 2011**

An Alternative View of Memorial Day

Posted by: "Dave" **mplsstreetrwy@earthlink.net**

Thu Jun 2, 2011 12:20 pm (PDT)

* Deep down, we all know that this powerful video is what Memorial Day should be about.
* And for professed Christians who pray for the troops, pay attention to the part starting at 3:52.

lightcaesar [http://www.youtube.com/user/lightcaesar](http://www.youtube.com/user/lightcaesar)

YouTube  [http://www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

"Our soldiers don't sacrifice for duty, honor or country; they sacrifice for Kellogg Brown & Root. They don't fight for America, they fight for their lives and their buddies beside them because we put them in a war zone. They are not 'defending our freedoms', they are laying the foundation for 14 permanent military bases to defend the freedoms of Exxon Mobil and British Petroleum. They're not establishing democracy, they are establishing the bases for an economic occupation..."

"They don't hate us 'because of our freedoms' - they hate us because every day we are funding and committing crimes against humanity. The so called 'War on Terror' is a cover for our military aggression to gain control of the resources of Western Asia. This is sending the poor of this country to kill the poor of those Muslim countries. This is trading blood for OIL. This is genocide. And to most of the world - WE are the terrorists."

Since WWII, 90% of the 'casualties of war' are unarmed civilians, a
third of them children.
Our victims have done nothing to us.
From Palestine to Afghanistan, to Iraq to Somalia, to wherever our next target may be - their murders are not collateral damage - they are the nature of 'modern warfare'.

More (video)...
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IRZ2scu40c&feature=player_embedd

END MEMORIAL DAY NEWSLETTER