OMNI PEACE FORCES DAY (ARMED FORCES DAY)
NEWSLETTER #3, 3RD Saturday of May, May 18, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace. (#1 May 21, 2011; #2 May 19, 2012).

My blog: War Department/Peace Department
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

My Newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:

Google Armed Forces Day to see how pro-military is their “search.” OMNI’S Peace Forces newsletter encourages us to think outside the C-130s, carrier battle groups, special ops/drone assassinations, and flags.

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters: http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/ For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

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TRUTHTELLERS
Many motors generate US wars –ignorance, hyper-patriotism, militarism: Pentagon, military-corporate-congressional-White House-mainstream media complex, secrecy about machinations and true motivations, shouting hateful lies about the “enemy,” deceit regarding the purposes of the wars. Transparency dissolves all.

PENTAGONARMED FORCESMAINSTREAMMEDIA GLORIFYING AGGRESSION AND DELUDING THE TROOPS AND THE PUBLIC

   Have US wars defended US “liberty.” (Enclosed in quotation marks because the meaning of the word varies considerably.) The next time someone says they have, ask her or him or them to name
one justifiable US war after WWII, one that was necessary, legal, moral. But you may have to help them with another example of US interventions and invasions. Here’s very short list: The Philippines. Guatemala? Nicaragua? Grenada? Panama? Afghanistan? Iraq? Some will say Afghanistan, but not after a few questions.

Questions in search of knowledge instead of emotion. Peace forces must be ready to question. We must therefore be informed. We must know the real reasons for impelling the US empire and militarism and the over 40 interventions and invasions since 1945. Knowledge is the first necessity for our peace force, to enable us to distinguish between chicanery and honesty, duplicity and candor.

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette seldom misses an opportunity to repeat the old lie of our patriotic troops defending our freedom fighting and dying in necessary wars. Here are a few examples.

LTE. “Comforting Welcome” (Sept. 21, 2012). The letter writer remembers “an American hero, Capt. Virgil Meroney” who, shot down over Laos in 1969, “gave all for his country.” His body was recently found. The ceremony occurred at the University Baptist Church, presided over by Retired Brig. Gen. H. D. McCarty. Capt. Meroney a hero? Surely neither the author of the letter nor Gen. (Rev.) McCarty were ignorant of what happened in neutral Laos under his bombs, or they would have given the Capt. a private remembrance. From 1964 to 1973, the U.S. dropped more than two million tons of ordnance on Laos during 580,000 bombing missions—equal to a planeload of bombs every 8 minutes, 24-hours a day, for 9 years – making Laos the most heavily bombed country per capita in history. The bombings, part of the U.S. Secret War in Laos, destroyed many villages and displaced hundreds of thousands of Lao civilians during the nine-year period. Up to a third of the bombs dropped did not explode, leaving Laos contaminated with vast quantities of unexploded ordnance (UXO). That they did know and still celebrated as a “hero” someone who participated in the mass killing and displacement of innocent civilians of a neutral country, and that the newspaper printed such a letter aware of the facts, are possibilities too grotesque to think.

“Ceremony Remembers 47 Arkansans Killed While Serving in Wars” (May 6, 2013). A single “bell rang once for each member of the Arkansas National Guard or state militia who died doing his patriotic duty.” Was it their duty to kill people who had nothing to do with the war? Was it patriotic to shoot and bomb civilians who became victims of the most powerful nation militarily in the world? What kind of duty, what quality of patriotism is that?

Editorial. “New Sheriff in Town”(May 6, 2013. Elderly veterans in a nursing home for veterans had “risked everything for us and ours.” “These veterans have given the rest of us so much. The least we can do is give them dignity.” For us and ours given so much? Why had they risked everything? Did they deliberately risk all? What had they given us? Had we been threatened? Name the nation that did that.

LTE. “Resident Makes Wishes on Sept. 11.” (I failed to record the date of this letter.) “I think about all the men and women who have died in defense of our country. And on Sept. 11, I think about how our country, for a short time, became patriotic again.” Which war does the writer refer to? Vietnam? Or did she mean to say: who died for the aggressions of our country?

We urgently need knowledge in this country. And compassion? Yes, but compassion arises from empathy, and empathy comes from knowledge, not just book knowledge about people and events, such as the victims of secret US bombings of Laos, but from experience with individual others different from us that might prevent wars. Compassion can be only a feel-good, feeble abstraction sometimes easy to deconstruct if not grounded in the real lives of sentient beings. We need to shatter the abstractions that allow or encourage people to kill.
That’s one reason why former Senator Fulbright opposed abstractions so repeatedly, and why he created the student and teacher exchange programs. In *The Price of Empire*

That intimate knowledge of different people partly explains why humane international treaties by and about real people succeed and why the absence of that knowledge fails. The New START Treaty passed the Senate by the same arguments Fulbright used for the Fulbright Exchanges: “getting acquainted,” conversations, collaborations, and negotiations, both cross border and within the US, work. The senators who voted for the treaty had to learn the truth, for example, among many misconceptions, of the consequences of nuclear bombs and the idea that cooperation with the other nations of the world would strengthen US security, a concept most citizens agree with already. And the senators’ learning curve came from the peace forces engaged in lobbying them with sustained, thoughtful advocacy.

Not enough senators, however, voted to ratify five other important treaties that would have increased the quality of life for people world-wide and US friendship and cooperation with the rest of the world: the UN Treaty to protect the rights of disabled people, the UN Law of the Sea Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Arms Trade Treaty, and the Mine Ban Treaty. Not enough senators could connect the dots of mutual needs and desires and real security to vote for the enhancing treaties. Some senators are ignorant (or misunderstanding), and many of the public also. And that void attracts fear and hatred, a condition perfect for the exploiting self-interests of the military-corporate complex.

But if this is true, then hope again resides in knowledge. This newsletter on *peace forces*—and all related OMNI newsletters—help to educate them so that compassion instead of violence can flourish. And on this foundation, we are prepared for political action and engagement with power in an interdependent world.

**Whistleblower Bradley Manning June 1st**

-[The only aspect of Manning’s heroic exposure of US bullying around the world that could have been improved is if it had been earlier. The US is imperiled by a WWII mentality that has metastasized into ColdWar/War on Terror permanent war in which no weapon, no secrecy, no budget is enough. If we are ever to stop its depredations, instead of celebrating Armed Forces Day we need to open Pentagon planning and machinations to public examination and to celebrate *Peace Forces.* –Dick]

**IVAW [feedback@ivaw.org]**

To: James R. Bennett

Dick,

Join IVAW for the June 1st Day of Action in support of Bradley Manning

June 1 marks the beginning of Bradley Manning’s fourth year in military prison awaiting trial with many violations of due process. Bradley’s conditions in prison have been described by Amnesty International and the United Nations as torturous.

Join IVAW and others in a show of support before Bradley's court martial.

Whistleblowing should not be a crime.

The U.S. government is attempting to make an example out of Manning, to intimidate anyone who might blow the whistle on government wrong-doing in the future.

But like many of our members who have had the courage to speak out against what our military has done in Iraq and Afghanistan, Bradley Manning was moved to take action due to a crisis of conscience.

The information he made public via WikiLeaks has been an important affirmation of IVAW's work by exposing the atrocities and misconduct of the Iraq war, and supports the eye-witness experiences of many of our members:

- Bradley released the Collateral Murder video that depicts a U.S. Army helicopter intentionally and illegally targeting Iraqi civilians. IVAW member Ethan McCord was there that day, witnessed the killing, and helped save the lives of Iraqi children who were severely injured.

- The Iraq War logs Bradley released provided civilian death counts that the U.S. government was
withholding.

- Bradley's leak exposed the corporate interests behind a variety of U.S. armed conflicts worldwide.

We strongly believe that Bradley Manning’s whistleblowing contributed to the declining public support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like Daniel Ellsberg, famed Pentagon Papers whistleblower, Manning should be honored as a person of conscience.

Join us at events around the country to stand up for Bradley and all whistleblowers.

The trial, U.S. v. BRADLEY MANNING, begins on June 3 at 9:00 AM and is expected to last 6-12 weeks, but most events in support of Bradley are taking place on June 1.

So far, events have been organized in 16 cities and counting! To find an event in your area, check the list. Don't see your location listed? Organize a solidarity action in your community and be sure to register it with the Bradley Manning Solidarity Network so they can list it on their website.

Interested in making the trek to Fort Meade? Learn more here.

The #1 New York Times bestseller that charts America's dangerous drift into a state of perpetual war.

Written with bracing wit and intelligence, Rachel Maddow's Drift argues that we've drifted
away from America's original ideals and become a nation weirdly at peace with perpetual war. To understand how we've arrived at such a dangerous place, Maddow takes us from the Vietnam War to today's war in Afghanistan, along the way exploring Reagan's radical presidency, the disturbing rise of executive authority, the gradual outsourcing of our war-making capabilities to private companies, the plummeting percentage of American families whose children fight our constant wars for us, and even the changing fortunes of G.I. Joe. Ultimately, she shows us just how much we stand to lose by allowing the scope of American military power to overpower our political discourse.

Sensible yet provocative, dead serious yet seriously funny, Drift will reinvigorate a "loud and jangly" political debate about our vast and confounding national security state.

TWO BOOKS ON VIETNAM WAR

MOYERS AND CO.

Excerpt: Kill Anything That Moves
February 8, 2013 by Nick Turse


On January 21, 1971, a Vietnam veteran named Charles McDuff wrote a letter to President Richard Nixon to voice his disgust with the American war in Southeast Asia. McDuff had witnessed multiple cases of Vietnamese civilians being abused and killed by American soldiers
and their allies, and he had found the U.S. military justice system to be woefully ineffective in punishing wrongdoers. “Maybe your advisors have not clued you in,” he told the president, “but the atrocities that were committed in Mylai are eclipsed by similar American actions throughout the country.” His three-page handwritten missive concluded with an impassioned plea to Nixon to end American participation in the war.

The White House forwarded the note to the Department of Defense for a reply, and within a few weeks Major General Franklin Davis Jr., the army’s director of military personnel policies, wrote back to McDuff. It was “indeed unfortunate,” said Davis, “that some incidents occur within combat zones.” He then shifted the burden of responsibility for what had happened firmly back onto the veteran. “I presume,” he wrote, “that you promptly reported such actions to the proper authorities.” Other than a paragraph of information on how to contact the U.S. Army criminal investigators, the reply was only four sentences long and included a matter-of-fact reassurance: United States Army has never condoned wanton killing or disregard for human life.

This was, and remains, the American military’s official position. In many ways, it remains the popular understanding in the United States as a whole. Today, histories of the Vietnam War regularly discuss war crimes or civilian suffering only in the context of a single incident: the My Lai massacre cited by McDuff. Even as that one event has become the subject of numerous books and articles, all the other atrocities perpetrated by U.S. soldiers have essentially vanished from popular memory. The visceral horror of what happened at My Lai is undeniable.

On the evening of March 15, 1968, members of the Americal Division’s Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, were briefed by their commanding officer, Captain Ernest Medina, on a planned operation the next day in an area they knew as “Pinkville.” As unit member Harry Stanley recalled, Medina “ordered us to ‘kill everything in the village.’” Infantryman Salvatore LaMartina remembered Medina’s words only slightly differently: they were to “kill everything that breathed.” What stuck in artillery forward observer James Flynn’s mind was a question one of the other soldiers asked: “Are we supposed to kill women and children?” And Medina’s reply: “Kill everything that moves.”

Nevertheless, Medina’s orders were followed to a T. Soldiers of Charlie Company killed. They killed everything. They killed everything that moved.

The next morning, the troops clambered aboard helicopters and were airlifted into what they thought would be a “hot LZ”—a landing zone where they’d be under hostile fire. As it happened, though, instead of finding Vietnamese adversaries spoiling for a fight, the Americans entering My Lai encountered only civilians: women, children, and old men. Many were still cooking their breakfast rice. Nevertheless, Medina’s orders were followed to a T. Soldiers of Charlie Company killed. They killed everything. They killed everything that moved.

Advancing in small squads, the men of the unit shot chickens as they scurried about, pigs as they bolted, and cows and water buffalo lowing among the thatch-roofed houses. They gunned down old men sitting in their homes and children as they ran for cover. They tossed grenades into homes without even bothering to look inside. An officer grabbed a woman by the hair and shot her point-blank with a pistol. A woman who came out of her home with a baby in her arms was shot down on the spot. As the tiny child hit the ground, another GI opened up on the infant with his M-16 automatic rifle.
Over four hours, members of Charlie Company methodically slaughtered more than five hundred unarmed victims, killing some in ones and twos, others in small groups, and collecting many more in a drainage ditch that would become an infamous killing ground.

They faced no opposition. They even took a quiet break to eat lunch in the midst of the carnage. Along the way, they also raped women and young girls, mutilated the dead, systematically burned homes, and fouled the area’s drinking water.

VFP Book of the Week: "Fire in the Hole: A Mortarman in Vietnam" by James Michael Orange

Author James Michael Orange, member of VFP Chapter 27 in Minneapolis, MN provides readers his survivor’s tale, told with honesty and compassion for those who fought on both sides of a conflict that sliced through the lives of so many. Orange came home in 1970 to another battlefield Kent State University, where the Ohio National Guard gunned down his classmates. Reeling and confused, he went from soldier to seaman on a Great Lakes ore carrier.

Fire in the Hole: A Mortarman in Vietnam [Paperback]

J. Michael Orange (Author)

Book Description

Publication Date: January 29, 2001

How does a young man coming of age in the 1960s go from seminarian to soldier? What can scare an average kid from Cleveland into killing for his country? The answer: Vietnam that soul-sucking war that still invades dreams. After surviving a year of combat and the loss of fellow Marines, Orange came home in 1970 to another battlefield Kent State University, where the Ohio National Guard gunned down his classmates. Reeling and confused, he went from soldier to seaman on a Great Lakes ore carrier. Then he became a hippie who fought against the same war he once supported, the same war that stole his youth and innocence. Orange reflects on his journey of tumult and tears from a vantage point of age and wisdom. This is a survivor’s tale, told with honesty and compassion for those who fought on both sides of a conflict that sliced through the lives of so many.

Editorial Reviews

About the Author

Orange served with the Marines in Vietnam (1969-70). After his discharge, Orange witnessed the events precedent to the shootings at Kent State University and participated in the peace movement until
the Wars end in 1975. Thirty-three years after Vietnam, I finally mustered the courage to face the
demons that lurked inside me all those years and get the help I needed. I completed nine months of
therapy for my case of combat-related PTSD. As part of my ongoing recovery (there is no cure), I stay
very involved with Veterans for Peace and befriend fellow vets with PTSD.


*www.amazon.com › Books › Biographies & Memoirs › Historical*

*Fire in the Hole* LYRICS - Orange 9mm from "Escape >From L.A." soundtrack. Read *Fire in
the Hole* song lyrics, watch music video, send ringtone, listen mp3 >

1.  

3:20 Orange 9mm - Fire in the Hole - YouTube

*www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTI2bsgs6ZM*

Mar 25, 2007 - Uploaded by wobblydoxology

NYC's Orange 9mm performing live in Detroit at St. Andrew's Hall. This is from December 1996, on tour ...

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For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation
for change.

**VFP Recommends the Film: Dirty Wars**

Starting in June, a remarkable anti-war film will be showing in big mainstream movie
theaters. *Dirty Wars* may be one of the best educational outreach opportunities the peace
movement has had in a long time.

If the movie is playing in your city email David Swanson
@ davidcnswanson@gmail.com if you are interested in any of the following:

- promoting the film with posters, flyers, and other materials
- discounts on bulk tickets

- Promoting and being part of talk-back sessions after screenings with Jeremy Scahill, Rick Rowley,
  Anthony Arnove, and other speakers

- organizing events at separate venues with the above or other speakers, and announcing those events at
  the film screenings

People who see this film are going to be outraged by our wars, are going to
understand that the wars make us less safe, and just might be ready to do
something about it.
Antiwar.com Sues FBI After Surveillance
Kelley Vlahos reports on our ACLU fight for free speech

Is Gov’t Spying on Reporters Often?
In a word, yes, says Julian Sanchez

Obama DOJ Accuses Reporter of Crimes
Journalism itself is now criminal, says Glenn Greenwald

133 Killed, 283 Wounded Monday in Iraq
Iraq: violence continues unabated

$79 Billion More for Afghan War
Funds in addition to $526 billion already requested

New Pak PM Urges Talks With Taliban
Sharif: Guns are not a solution to all problems

Nawaz Sharif Wins
Eric Margolis breaks down Pakistani politics

The Origins of the War Economy
Christopher Coyne on what WWII wrought

The Shame of Guantanamo Bay
Ray McGovern on President Wuss and his failures

Jeremy Scahill’s ‘Dirty’ Work
Jeremy Scahill’s new book, *Dirty Wars: The World is a Battlefield*, is sort of like approaching a dark cavity in an old tree. How many of us would instinctively cry out, “I don’t want to look – there will be creepy crawly things in there and I’m better off not knowing!”

Life is filled with shadowy, foreboding places, but the majority of Americans are conditioned to the look the other way, so much so that they defend their ignorance with great vigor, especially when it comes to national security and war. This kind of blind trust in the government has been confused with patriotism — especially after 9/11 — which has allowed all manner of creepy crawly things to multiply and wreak havoc while most of our heads are simply turned elsewhere.

Luckily, reporter Scahill has cared to look, and poke at and examine, all with smaller resources and prestige than his peers in the corporate media, but then again, most corporate media reporters are flat-out restrained from peering into the dark hollow of the Global War on Terror, much less interested in writing about it. Beginning with *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army* in 2008, Scahill has used his perch at *The Nation Institute* to shine a light inside the hole, and show us that whatever abomination lurks inside is, in reality, much worse than we had even imagined.

Read at your own risk, but *Dirty Wars* does all that and more. After years of researching, Scahill is nothing but thorough in his examination of the war within the war — whether
it be the covert assassination squads rampaging across countries most Americans couldn’t find on a map, “the black site” torture chambers in Afghanistan and Iraq, or today’s signature drone strikes that wipe out insurgents and children alike without warrant or jury. All have been condoned and expedited by an executive branch authority that has metastasized in unilateral power since the Twin Towers fell in 2001. But willful ignorance helped it along: those in power had an interest in keeping it secret (or were kept out of the loop entirely), while the powerless kept quiet, mostly because they were afraid to look.

“This book tells the story of the expansion of covert US wars, the abuse of executive privilege and state secrets, the embrace of unaccountable elite military units that answer only to the White House,” Scahill begins. Five hundred and twenty pages later, he concludes simply with a question all Americans must “painfully” ask, “how does a war like this end?”

* * *

The recent events in Boston offer the simplest, but not the most encouraging answer: “not easily.” After nearly 12 years of continuous war in which the full extent of American activities are now being revealed by serious independent journalists like Scahill, only the true partisans, kool-aid drinkers and of course, those with a stake in maintaining the fiction, would deny the vicious cycle from which there appears no ready respite.

From Elmirza Khozhugov, ex-brother-in-law of Boston bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev, in an e-mail about Tamerlan’s most recent behavior to The New York Times last week: “He was looking for connections between the wars in the Middle East and oppression of Muslim population around the globe.” Perhaps it’s premature to assume the motives of Tsarnev, who died in a firefight with police, and his younger brother, who was captured and is in custody on a litany of federal criminal charges. But members of congress and the rightwing punditry already feel informed enough to have declared the brothers “radicalized,” and are calling their alleged crimes a “new element” in the ongoing struggle against those (Islamist extremists) who hate us for our freedom and “way of life.”

Iraqi with Guard: cerdit AFP/Getty
Let us stand back a moment, and without making excuses for anyone who blows up innocent people congregating on crowded street corners in broad daylight, take a closer look at two of the most explosive themes in *Dirty Wars*: 1.) The White House gave explicit permission to the military to spy, assassinate and torture with official cover — wherever it wanted in the world, whenever it wanted, and 2.) The military established an elaborate system of hidden torture chambers in which untold numbers of mostly innocent Muslims suffered during the height of these hyper-aggressive counter-terror operations.

Fuse that with 10 years of extra-judicial drone strikes. Would it be so hard to imagine where these “new elements” of terror — the freshly minted martyrs and the al Qaeda-affiliated groups in Yemen, Pakistan, North Africa and beyond – were coming from?

“I think we’re living in a world where we are not going to be immune to the payback for some of the things that we’ve done. And unless—unless we, as a society, completely re-imagine what an actual [a genuine, deep, successful—Dick] national security policy would look like, one that recognizes the dignity of other people around the world or the rights of people to practice their religion or determine their form of government, unless we’re willing to re-imagine how we approach the world, we’re doomed to have a repeat of a 9/11-type attack or something that’s smaller-scale but constant,” Scahill noted in a recent interview with Democracy Now!

* * *

“Iraq,” Scahill wrote in *Dirty Wars*, “would serve as a laboratory for creating a new kill/capture machine, centered on JSOC (Joint Special Operations Command), run by (Gen. Stanley) McChrystal and accountable to no one but a small group of White House and Pentagon insiders.”

With sources cultivated over years, Scahill is able to piece together a timeline in which McChrystal, a career special forces officer with extraordinary “stomach and stamina for the fight,” as well as one of the Pentagon’s “fellow travelers in the great crusade against Islam,” is paired with a messianic White House that with a roll of then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s ball point pen, was able facilitate not only JSOC’s new lead in all counter-terror operations, but its ability to operate “and hit targets” outside the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

What happens, as richly told in the book, is what could only be described in biblical terms: something like the four horsemen of the apocalypse, searching, seeking and vanquishing for the ultimate cleansing of the world.

**JSOC** was built up in Iraq and Afghanistan to conduct surveillance, interrogations and killing, parallel to (and often sidelining) the CIA and the conventional military, but without the congressional oversight that bound those other institutions. Soon, thanks to the Bush White House, JSOC was independently establishing “liaison offices” across the Middle East for the manhunt, no permission necessary.

“In many ways it was the definitive vision of the type of wars Rumsfeld and Cheney had longed for: no accountability, maximum secrecy and total flexibility,” wrote
Scahill. Rumsfeld had declared “the entire world is ‘the battlespace,’” and President George W. Bush gushed, “JSOC is awesome.” As if ripped from the failed Vietnam playbook, Bush pressed his commanders “on how many people they killed on any given day,” Scahill wrote. “The conventional generals would often balk at the question, but the answer from the JSOC crew was unequivocal.” At one point, Mike Flynn, McChrystal’s intelligence chief for Task Force 121, the joint command running the counter-terror war, was asked the question. He replied, “thousands” of Iraqis, “I don’t even know how many.”

Over the years, Task Force 121 (and its many incarnations) has gotten little press. When McChrystal was appointed head of U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2009, Esquire magazine raised a number of questions about his responsibility for the torture and abuse allegations raised against Task Force 121 in Iraq, otherwise known as Camp NAMA (Nasty-ass Military Area). But not surprisingly, the mainstream media ignored it. Lucky for us, Scahill kept like a dog with a bone on this story, and is able to offer it up in Dirty Wars, in stomach-turning detail.

A prisoner in Iraq, held at gunpoint by US soldiers. Credit: AP

“The world knew about Guantanamo, and would soon know the name Abu Ghraib... but almost no one ever talked about Camp NAMA,” he wrote. Using “torture techniques, built up on the demands from Rumsfeld, Cheney and their posses for more results in interrogations,” the motto, “as advertised in posters throughout the camp, was “no blood no foul,” or as one Department of Defense official told Scahill, “if you don’t make them bleed, they can’t prosecute you for it.” But that apparently left for a lot of gray area in between.

People taken to the camp were not given the rights of prisoners of war, they were “off the grid.” The Red Cross was denied access. According to a scathing report by Human Rights Watch, which was aided by whistleblower interrogators at the time, prisoners were subjected to “beatings, exposure to extreme cold, threats of death, humiliation, and various forms of psychological abuse or torture.” Outside military officials who tried to investigate the activities of the prison were rebuffed, as well as congressional inquiries.

Inside, there were CIA, DIA (defense intelligence agency), all operating under JSOC’s command, which seemed to “have some sort of an express elevator” straight to Secretary Rumsfeld’s office in Washington.

At Camp NAMA there was a “Soft Room” for cooperative and high-ranking detainees, and Blue and Red Rooms for medium–intensity interrogations. “The Black Room was preserved...
from its days as a torture chamber under Saddam, and, for good measure, the task force kept the meat hooks that hung from the ceiling during the Iraqi dictator’s reign of terror in place for their use ... it was here that JSOC would perform its harshest interrogations.”

According to Scahill the JSOC interrogators were being trained in reverse SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape) techniques — meaning, they were schooled in using all the awful methods our soldiers train to endure if captured by the enemy. “Inside the Black room, the full-spectrum of SERE tactics were unleashed on detainees, along with a slew of medieval freestyle techniques…the interrogators there often incorporated extremely loud music, strobe lights, beatings, environmental and temperature manipulation, sleep deprivation, twenty-four hour interrogation sessions, water and stress positions, and personal, often sexual humiliation. The forced nudity of prisoners was not uncommon. Almost any act was permissible against the detainees as long as it complied with the “No Blood, No Foul” motto. But eventually, even blood was okay.”

One former prisoner, the son of Saddam Hussein’s bodyguard, recalled being punched in the spine until he fainted and kicked in the stomach until he vomited. Others described “heinous acts committed against them” including sodomy with foreign objects, “forcing water up their rectums and using extreme dietary manipulation.” Members of the task force “would beat prisoners with rifle butts and spit in their face.” In one case, recalled by a lieutenant in the Air Force who had come to JSOC as an interrogator in early September 2003, a detainee was brought to a bus stop, under the assumption he was being released. It was a mind game — “moments later they snatched him again and returned him to NAMA.” He was hooded, his clothes ripped off and he was shackled, where he was forced to stand for 12 hours, said witness Steven Kleinman. “The guards were not to respond to any requests for help.”

The examples wear on brutally for pages in Dirty Wars, so much that one finds themselves asking, “is this my country?” and, where was John McCain, the go-to moral compass against torture, having endured his own imprisonment in Vietnam 40 years earlier? Our indignant sanctimony over the torture of our own POWs rings a bit tinny and false now as we turn a blind eye to what happened in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan.

And what happened, really? Military intelligence officers later admitted to the Red Cross that somewhere between 70 and 90 percent of “the persons deprived of their liberty in Iraq had been arrested by mistake.” In a classified military report in 2003, authors warned that, “the task force’s abuse of detainees combined with the mass arrests of Iraqis gave the impression that the United States and its allies were acting like ‘gratuitous enemies’ of the Iraqi people.”

But wrongdoing was handled in-house and culpability minimal. Attempts to get further at the truth were stymied. Whistleblowers were blackballed. The abuses continued, and in different ways, including plans in 2004 by General David Petraeus and retired U.S Col James Steele to “Salvadorize Iraq” by building Shiite special operation forces that eventually turned into death squads and interrogation facilities that transformed into torture chambers (recently revealed in a Guardian expose and documentary).
As a result, Al Qaeda, led by Abu Masab al Zarqawi, bloomed and flourished in Iraq and contributed to the ensuing civil war. “Although General Petraeus would be credited years later with ‘winning’ the Iraq War through a troop ‘surge,’ he had also, along with Zarqawi, helped to destroy Iraq and create a sectarian bloodbath that would live on well past the U.S occupation,” charges Scahill.

Dirty Wars doesn’t dwell on Iraq – Scahill takes full advantage of his field reporting in Somalia to turn over the rocks there, as well as the real story behind the drone deaths of American Anwar al-Awlaki and his 16-year-old son in 2011 (including interviews with family), and the hunt for al Qaeda in Pakistan. Today, the Global War on Terror has been institutionalized by the Obama White House, “using drone, cruise missile and Special Ops raids,” in “a mission to kill its way to victory,” Scahill writes. “Future U.S presidents – Republican or Democratic – will inherit a streamlined process for assassinating enemies of America, perceived or real. They will inherit an executive branch with sweeping powers, rationalized under the banner of national security.”

Scahill surmises that, “no one can scientifically predict the future consequences” of the aforementioned activities. “But, from my experience in several undeclared war zones across the globe, it seems clear that the United States is helping to breed a new generation of enemies in Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and throughout the Muslim world.”

Last week’s timing on the release of Dirty Wars – along with its accompanying award-winning documentary of the same name – serves as a opportune counterbalance to the prevailing narrative, that what happened in Boston was some unprovoked attack in the “struggle” against terror, which ignores America’s own role in that struggle all along. There is no excusing the pain and fear the suspects in the case inflicted on Boston that day, but to deny reality is to simply perpetuate the cycle. Thanks to Scahill’s willingness to reach into dark places, we have one more tool with which to try and reverse it.

Follow Vlahos on Twitter @KelleyBVlahos

Read more by Kelley B. Vlahos

- Robert Greenwald’s Brave New Film – May 13th, 2013
- Iraq’s Generation Hell – May 6th, 2013
PEACEMAKERS


Lennon Ono Grant For Peace 2012 awarded to Rachel Corrie, John Perkins, Christopher Hitchens, Pussy Riot and Lady Gaga

Fri 05 Oct 2012 – Awards [Dick: I consider Christopher Hitchens a brilliant writer and very often a true supporter of peace and justice, but I would not give him a prize for peacemaking.]
LENNONONO GRANT FOR PEACE 2012
On October 9th, 2012, in Reykjavik, Iceland, Yoko Ono will give the Biennial LENNONONO GRANT FOR PEACE to five activists. This day also celebrates the birthday of John Lennon and his son Sean.

This year’s LENNONONO GRANT FOR PEACE recipients are:
• LADY GAGA
• RACHEL CORRIE
• JOHN PERKINS
• CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS
• PUSSY RIOT
IMAGINE PEACE TOWER
The annual lighting of IMAGINE PEACE TOWER will take place in the evening at 8pm local time on the island of Viðey in Reykjavik, Iceland.
Yoko Ono invites people all over the world to join her in spirit when she lights IMAGINE PEACE TOWER in honour of all the activists of the world; past, present and future.

She asks everyone to join together and let the power of light become a collective expression of the desire for peace and harmony on the planet.


Great Peacemakers: True Stories from Around the World
Ken Beller, Heather Chase  LTS Press 03/08
Book Review By Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat in Spirituality and Practice.

Conflict, war and violence are the norm in today's world. But, fortunately, there are also peacemakers around who offer another path, one that brings meaning and transformation
and hope to a weary planet. Ken Beller and Heather Case spent five years researching and writing this inspiring and salutary resource, which presents the true stories of 20 peacemakers. The book is organized into five sections:

**Choosing Nonviolence**
- Henry David Thoreau: *Living Deliberately*
- Mahatma Gandhi: *Nonviolent Resistance*
- Martin Luther King, Jr.: *Daring to Dream*
- Anderson Sa: *An Instrument of Change*

**Living Peace**
- Mother Teresa: *Love in Action*
- Thich Nhat Hanh: *Being Peace*
- Colman McCarthy: *Teaching Peace*
- Oscar Arias: "Us" Refers to All of Humankind

**Honoring Diversity**
- Bruno Hussar: *Interfaith Harmony*
- Desmond Tutu: *All Belong*
- Riane Eisler: *Partnership, Not Domination*
- The Dalai Lama: *Universal Compassion*

**Valuing All Life**
- Henry Salt: *The Creed of Kinship*
- Albert Schweitzer: *Reverence for Life*
- Astrid Lindgren: *A Voice for the Voiceless*
- Jane Goodall: *Realizing Our Humanity*

**Caring for the Planet**
- Rachel Carson: *The Balance of Nature*
- David Suzuki: *Redefining Progress*
- Nader Khalili: *Sustainable Community*
- Wangari Maathai: *Planting Seeds of Peace*

This is an invaluable resource for youth who need many more models of the different ways to bring peace into our world of savagery. Each biography concludes with a section of quotations from the peacemaker.

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by Frederic and Mary Brussat

In the book, *Peace Heroes in Twentieth Century America*, the editor, Dr. Charles DeBenedetti, lauded individuals "of conscience and purpose who decided to act at the risk of being wrong for what they believed was the greater good in living peace." These peace heroes were persons of hope who aspired not to power but to purpose. Borrowing a phrase, Dr. DeBenedetti described them as progenitors of "the party of humanity," an
association of leaders who would move beyond nationalistic concerns and consider the well-being of the whole human family. These leaders would "depict and communicate accurately the nature and gravity of the global crisis, propose possible solutions, promulgate an inclusive sense of human solidarity, and, most of all, inspire a sense of hope that humankind might yet prevail."

...For me and for many others, Charles DeBenedetti was himself a contemporary peace hero. As a professor of history at the University of Toledo in Ohio and author of three books, he combined extensive research with dedicated classroom teaching in his effort to further the cause of peace. His search for grassroots solutions moved him to help found the Interfaith Justice and Peace Center in Toledo, which continues to be a powerful influence for good in our area. His passion for peace thrust him out of the classroom into the world of marches, rallies and protests where he acted with both courage and intelligence. Throughout his all too brief academic career, he spoke out against the dangers of nationalism while finding his own natural home in "the party of humanity." Upon his death, the amazing outpouring of tributes testified in a graphic way to the sense of hope that he often inspired in others. Using his own criteria, we can count him among our local peace heroes....


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**Saleem H. Ali**

The Virtual Realm of Saleem H. Ali
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**Saleem H. Ali** is Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont's Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources and the founding Director of the Institute for Environmental Diplomacy and Security at UVM's James Jeffords Center for Policy Research. Currently he is on leave from UVM and serving as the Director of the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining at the University of Queensland, Australia where he is also affiliated with the Rotary Peace Studies Centre. He is also on the visiting faculty for the United Nations mandated University for Peace (Costa Rica). Dr. Ali's research focuses on the causes and consequences of environmental conflicts and how ecological factors can promote peace. Much of his empirical research has focused on environmental conflicts in the mineral sector. His most recent book is titled *Treasures of the Earth: Need, Greed and a Sustainable Future* (Yale University Press).
Dr. Ali is also involved in numerous nonprofit organizations to promote environmental peace-building and serves on the board of The DMZ Forum for Peace and Nature Conservation and International Peace Park Expeditions in the United States and on the board of governors for LEAD-Pakistan. Among his earlier works, the widely acclaimed volume Peace Parks: Conservation and Conflict Resolution (MIT Press, September, 2007).

Máiread Maguire, née Máiread Corrigan, also called (from 1981) Máiread Corrigan Maguire (born Jan. 27, 1944, Belfast, N.Ire.), Northern Irish peace activist who, with Betty Williams and Ciaran McKeown, founded the Peace People, a grassroots movement of both Roman Catholic and Protestant citizens dedicated to ending the sectarian strife in Northern Ireland. For their work, Maguire and Williams shared the 1976 Nobel Prize for Peace.

Although Maguire from a young age earned her living as a secretary, she also was from her youth a member of the Legion of Mary, a lay Catholic welfare organization, and through it she became deeply involved in voluntary social work among children and teenagers in various Catholic neighbourhoods of Belfast. She was stirred to act against the growing violence in Northern Ireland after witnessing in August 1976 an incident in which a car being driven by an Irish Republican Army (IRA) terrorist went out of control when the IRA man was shot by British troops. The car struck and killed three children of Maguire’s sister. Williams was also a witness. Within days each woman had publicly denounced the violence and called for mass opposition to it. Marches of Catholic and Protestant women, numbering in the thousands, were organized, and shortly afterward the Peace People was founded based on the conviction that genuine reconciliation and prevention of future violence were possible, primarily through the integration of schools, residential areas, and athletic clubs. The organization published a biweekly paper, Peace by Peace, and provided for families of prisoners a bus service to and from Belfast’s jails.

Although Williams broke away from the Peace People in 1980, Maguire remained an active member and later served as the group’s honorary president. In 2006 Maguire joined Williams
and fellow Nobel Peace Prize winners Shirin Ebadi, Jody Williams, Wangari Maathai, and Rigoberta Menchú to found the Nobel Women’s Initiative. Maguire was also active in various Palestinian causes—notably efforts to end the Israeli government’s blockade of the Gaza Strip—and she was deported from Israel on several occasions.

Lanza del Vasto

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
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Born
Giuseppe Giovanni Luigi Enrico Lanza di Trabia
(1901-09-29)29 September 1901
San Vito dei Normanni, Italy

Died
January 5, 1981(1981-01-05)
Elche de la Sierra, Spain

Occupation
Philosopher, poet, artist, and nonviolent activist.
Lanza del Vasto, (Giuseppe Giovanni Luigi Enrico Lanza di Trabia), (September 29, 1901 – January 5, 1981) was a philosopher, poet, artist, catholic and nonviolent activist.

A western disciple of Mohandas K. Gandhi, he worked for inter-religious dialogue, spiritual renewal, ecological activism and nonviolence.

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[edit] Meeting Gandhi

In December 1936, Lanza went to India, joining the movement for Indian independence led by Gandhi. He knew of Gandhi through a book by Romain Rolland. He spent six months with the Mahatma, then in June 1937, went to the source of the Ganges river in the Himalayas, a famous pilgrimage site. There he saw a vision who told him "Go back and found!"

He left then India and went back to Europe. In 1938, he went to Palestine, then in the midst of civil war, to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, "between two lines of tanks".

He came back to Paris at the time when the Second World War started. He wrote some poetry books and in 1943 he published the story of his trip to India, Return to the Source, which became a huge success.

[edit] Foundation of the Ark

He founded the Community of the Ark in 1948 which first met a lot of difficulties. In 1954, he went back to India to participate in nonviolent anti-feudal struggles with Vinoba Bhave.

In 1962 the Community of the Ark settled in Haut-Languedoc, in the south of France, at the Borie Noble, near Lodève, in a deserted village. After numbering over a hundred members in the 1970s and 1980s, some communities were closed in the 1990s due to conflicts, ageing population (under thirty members) and a lack of interest in its work and lifestyle. Since 2000, groups are present in few regions of France, in Belgium, Spain, Italy, Equator and Canada.[1]

[edit] Nonviolent struggles

In 1957, during the Algerian War, del Vasto started with other known people (General de Bollardière, François Mauriac, Robert Barrat, etc.) a movement of protest against torture. He fasted for 21 days. In 1958, he demonstrated against the nuclear power plant in Marcoule, France, which produced plutonium for nuclear weapons.
In 1963, he fasted for 40 days in Rome during the Second Vatican Council, asking Pope John XXIII to stand against war - "Pour demander au Pape de prendre position contre la guerre."

In 1965 he was at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina, talking about no-violence during weeks with the students.

Left to right, Jean-Marie Muller, Lanza del Vasto, Jacques de la Bollardière on the Larzac during the struggle against the military camp extension.

In 1972, he supported the farmers of the Larzac plateau against the extension of a military base while fasting for 15 days. In 1974 a community of the Ark settled in the Larzac in a farmhouse bought by the army.

In 1976, he participated to the demonstrations against the building of the fast breeder reactor Superphénix at Creys-Malville, Isère (France).

[edit] Books in English


This newsletter continues OMNI’s NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT. Half of the Project affirms nonviolent DAYs, such as Human Rights Day. The other half offers alternatives to violent, imperial, or generally misdirected days, as with the following:

Feb. 14: Standing on the Side of Love Day (formerly Valentine’s Day)

May, 2nd Sunday: Julia Ward Howe’s Mother’s Day for Peace (Mother’s Day)

3rd Sat. in May: Peace Forces Day (Armed Forces Day)
May, last Monday: Day of Mourning for Victims of Wars (Memorial Day)
June 14: Liberty and Justice for All Day (Flag Day)
June, 3rd Sunday: Father’s Day for Peace (Father’s Day)
September 11 (9-11): Peaceful Tomorrows Day (Patriot Day)
Oct., 2nd Monday: Indigenous Peoples Day (Columbus Day):
Nov. 11: World Unity Day (Veterans Day) (Or Armistice Day in 1918 when WWI ended).
November: Fourth Thursday: National Day of Gratitude and Atonement (Thanksgiving)
December 7: Pacific Colonial War Day (Pearl Harbor Day)
December 25: Love and Peacemaking Day (Christmas)

END PEACE FORCES DAY NEWSLETTER #3

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