OMNI, SUPPORT THE TROOPS NEWSLETTER #2, December 9, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett for Culture of Peace and Justice. (#1 Oct. 15, 2013)

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

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

See OMNI’s several newsletters on Us Imperialism and related subjects.

Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/


DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS (DAV)

Dick Bennett

A DAV advertisement on PBS May 14, 2013, thanks vets for sacrificing themselves to save our way of life (photos of vets with missing limbs) and appeals for support for better care. But the message is based upon several unexamined assumptions.

One enormous assumption is that the wars in which the vets were wounded were defensive, needed, legal, moral indeed righteous. If, as I think, most of the wars were aggressions, unnecessary, and illegal, where does that leave the vets and the DAV? These newsletters reply to this question.


Contents #1 Oct. 15, 2013
DICK BENNETT, WHAT SERVICE WERE YOU IN?

Smith, “Linemen To Take Electricity to Guatemala” (ADG 9-1-13).

“Service” the word serves militarism well. Ask the question and everybody knows the question pertains to the military service. But is that the only service for young men and women in the USA? Of course not. The only hazardous service? Again, no. The best service? Now here is the real, the controversial question. Why do we give a higher priority to military service people, whose service includes, when ordered, killing, than to those service people whose service involves protecting and rescuing people, such as doctors and nurses, firemen, teachers, and, in the case of this article, electric linemen? And these are also hazardous jobs, more or less (as with military persons, combat or distant support). Let’s get our priorities straightened out in the US and value the people who save lives and don’t kill people, particularly in illegal and unjust wars.

Dick Bennett, DON’T PUNISH THE MARINES?

“Punish those Marines for urinating on the enemy? I should say not. Our government is developing a
very dangerous pattern by punishing those we enlist to protect us.” Sue Richardson, Bella Vista. “Don’t Punish the Marines.” ADG (1-23-12). [Protect us? From Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, Grenadians? Afghans, Iraqis? William Blum describes over 50 nations the US has invaded or intervened with, and only the Axis of WWII has attacked the US. Our Marines have invaded two dozen countries, killing their people. Pissing on them is a minor issue comparatively. –Dick]


Wal-Mart says it employs 100,000 now and “that figure is expected to double over the next five years.” How is this happening? Partly, the reporter tells us, because it is committed to hiring vets, including recruitment through its Veterans Welcome Home Commitment. VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki visited Wal-Mart to praise W-M for putting vets to work. Why is W-M doing this? No executive was quoted, but perhaps Shinseki’s explanation partly applies: vets are “people with tremendous opportunities to provide service both to the nation and to the businesses they work with’.” And he adds, echoing the Obama administration’s overall view: “What they need, he said, are jobs, a good education, quality health care ‘and the opportunity to join the middle class and help all of us get the economy rolling again.’” President Obama is later quoted by Shinseki as being fond of saying, “Veterans who have fought our wars shouldn’t have to fight for jobs,’ and that’s what our discussion has been about today.”

Many underlying assumptions are not questioned. Did the reporter check the 100,000 claim? Exaggeration is a frequent liability in commercial publicity. Why are veterans given this privilege and not other unemployed service citizens or citizens seeking larger salaries for their essential service—mental health workers, teachers, librarians, ambulance drivers, firefighters, city councillors? If the veterans voluntarily participated and killed innocent people in U.S. unconstitutional wars, a case could be made that all of the vets hired should be carefully examined regarding their critical thinking and their combat record. Wal-Mart: instead of touting how many vets you have hired of the some fifty illegal interventions and invasions performed by the corporate-Pentagon-White House-Congressional-Imperial Complex, hire the victims of these violent violations.

I can think of one persuasive counter-argument: our troops themselves are victims—of the false myths used to justify the US empire (we conquer and kill for freedom and democracy; the US is exceptional, unique and not expected to follow universal norms such as those defended by the World Court); of the lying recruiters who persuade young and poor people to join; and women soldier victims of rapists. If compassion for these veterans motivates Wal-Mart, let CEO Bill Simon, a U.S. Navy veteran, say so.
We often hear, from antiwar activists as well as pious politicians and every sort of commentator, that we should all "support the troops." No matter what one thinks of the particular war being
fought, this kind of boilerplate is invariably appended: "But of course," we are told, "everyone supports the troops." We honor them for their service. We pat them on the back and say: "Good job!"

In this context, consider the details of the most recent atrocity coming out of Afghanistan, the activities of the "Thrill Kill platoon," which is accused of murdering Afghan civilians and keeping body parts as trophies. The alleged mastermind of the thrill-killers, Staff Sergeant Calvin Gibbs, is also under investigation by military authorities on suspicion of carrying out similar murders in Iraq. The Gibbs "kill team" is suspected of slaughtering at least seven Afghan civilians, and quite possibly more, in the most heinous manner imaginable. Gibbs and four others were arrested in June, and seven others are being held.

These twelve apostles of mayhem — assigned to the 2nd Stryker Brigade, and stationed at Forward Operating Base Ramrod, along the border with Pakistan — randomly chose unarmed Afghan civilians to murder. Then they shot them, or blew them up with grenades, mutilating the victims. Gibbs, the alleged ringleader, made necklaces out of the body parts. They covered up their killing spree by placing weapons near the corpses, and the incidents went down in the records as gun battles with "insurgents."

Gibbs reportedly has a tattoo on his left calf which is a pictorial record of his crime spree: it consists of two crossed pistols encircled by six skulls. According to news reports, the red skulls indicate murders carried out in Iraq, and the blue skulls represent Afghan kills.

Knowledge of the killings was widely shared in the camp, and it’s hard to imagine higher-ups were unaware of what was going on. But there was indeed one apparently unwilling participant, Adam Winfield, who desperately tried to reach out to his parents, to whom he confessed the murders.

The "honor the troops" brigade will tell us this is just another case of a few bad apples: this latest incident is no reason to condemn the entire US military – is it?

Well, quite frankly, it is, because, as Winfield pointed out to his parents in a February 14 Facebook posting: "Pretty much the whole platoon knows about it. It’s okay with all of them pretty much. Except me.... I want to do something about it [but] the only problem is I don’t feel safe here telling anyone." "I talked to someone," Winfield continued, "and they told me this stuff happens all the time and that when we get back there is always someone that spills the beans so it normally works its way out."

Winfield’s father asked, "No one else thought it was wrong?" Winfield’s reply:

"No, everyone just wants to kill people at any cost, they don’t care, the Army is full of a bunch of scumbags, I realized."

Winfield resigned his position as the platoon’s team leader because "I cannot be a leader in a platoon that allows this to happen." He went on to make a key point:
"There are no more good men left here.... I started to think whether I should quit and just give up because it's stupid to get smoked in Afghanistan. The Army really let me down when I thought I would come out here to do good, maybe make some change in this country.... I find out that it's all a lie."

None of this would have come out if not for an investigation into alleged drug use by soldiers. Investigators uncovered widespread and rampant drug use, including hashish, opium, and anti-depressants which are issued by the military: in the course of their investigation, one of the thrill-killers – apparently under the influence at the time – spilled the beans. In addition, Winfield’s parents made repeated calls to military authorities immediately upon learning of this horror, but before I get to any of that I want to underscore Winfield’s words:

"There are no more good men left here."

Of course there aren’t. What kind of person joins the military at this particular point in time – a point when the US is engaged in endless wars of aggression, and stories of atrocities committed by "our" soldiers are coming out all the time? For the most part, precisely the kind of person who would delight in the orgy of bloodlust conducted by the "thrill kill platoon." The military has become an outlet for the sociopaths in our midst.

Yes, I know, with the recession people will be joining for economic reasons: after all, where else can they find a job?

Economic considerations no doubt play a large part in the decision to go into the military, but other factors also play a part in making this choice: alongside economic necessity, in this instance, is the generalized knowledge that atrocities are being committed over there. Winfield says the whole platoon knew about what was going on with the "thrill killers," and the same can be said about the entire country when it comes to atrocities being committed in Iraq and Afghanistan by US troops, and I don’t just mean Abu Ghraib. This grisly record is common knowledge, and, in deciding to join up, the prospective US soldier is consciously choosing to ignore or downplay the moral aspects of being asked to commit atrocities: it’s much more important to him (or her) to make a living.

This is the definition of a moral monster.

There was a time, not so long ago, when the decision to seek a career in the military did not involve becoming such a monster. That time has long since passed. To put on an American uniform today is to become complicit in a criminal enterprise, and this characterization is not by any means limited to the thrill-killer platoon but to the entire killing machine deployed to carry out Washington’s grand design.

When Winfield’s parents contacted US military authorities they were told nothing could be done unless Winfield came forward in Afghanistan – where his life was at risk. The others suspected him of being "soft," and threats had already come in from the thrill-killers that if he squealed his life was worth nothing: the ringleader waved the finger of a dead Afghan in his face to illustrate the point. The day he learned of the situation his son was in – Valentine’s Day, a Sunday — Winfield’s father left message on the Army Inspector General’s hotline, the Army’s criminal
investigations division, and the office of Sen. Bill Nelson, Democrat of Florida. The response was nil. A few days later, Private Winfield was forced by his sergeant to engage in yet another random murder: Winfield says he aimed high and missed, but the military is still charging him in the killing.

The Army knew what was going on. As that officer said to Winfield, this sort of thing goes on all the time. It’s part of our "footprint," even in areas where we aren’t engaged in military operations. Where US military bases exist, murders and rapes committed by US military personnel are common: the bases themselves are ringed with bars, houses of prostitution, and other less-than-savory establishments, catering to the thuggish tastes and habits of our centurions as they guard the perimeters of the American empire. These bases are running sores on the faces of our client states and protectorates, and, as in Japan, immensely resented ambassadors of ill will.

So what can we do about it? Short of getting the US out of Iraq and Afghanistan, not to mention the rest of the world, the antiwar movement can engage in an aggressive campaign of counter-recruitment. This latest atrocity, which has been downplayed by the US media, should be publicized extensively, in tandem with a focused effort to persuade young people not to join up. If the media is running "public service announcements" and ads promoting military service, we should run counter-ads – and take full advantage of the controversy when the networks refuse to run them.

The US military is a criminal enterprise, just as the ruling elite in this country is the equivalent of a crime syndicate: and they are getting away with murder. One day, the people’s justice will be visited on them. Let’s hope that rough justice doesn’t unfairly impact us all.

The US is exporting its sociopaths overseas, in hopes that the havoc such people usually wreak can be put to some "good" use, but such callousness will soon blow back in our faces when Johnnie-the-thug comes marching home. We’ve already seen a spate of vicious murders committed by just-released veterans of the Iraq and Afghan wars: mental illness is rife among these veterans, and a disproportionately large segment is turning violent. More worrisome, gang members are reportedly joining in droves, and being accepted because the military is desperate to make its recruiting quota. They are boasting that when they come back, trained to kill by professionals, they’ll be in good shape to continue their criminal activities on the home front. It will be a harsh justice indeed as these deranged killers visit the same sort of destruction on us as they inflicted on their innocent victims overseas.

I Support the Troops
By James Ostrowski
I Support the Troops (Coming Home)
by James Ostrowski

Listening to Rush the other day, I started thinking, can’t we get rid of that old canard, "we must support the troops," as an argument for war? This old bromide has been around since Vietnam, and in many cases, the same chicken hawks, arm-chair generals and dedicated non-combatants who used it then are using it now. Rush, the best way to support the troops is to be one of them, would you? They could use the respite. So could we, from you.

But Rush, who will never occupy a military body bag, has tossed out this hackneyed cliché. So bear with me while I shift into my left brain mode — warning to ditto heads: this might hurt a bit.

"Support the troops" as a propaganda slogan didn’t make any more sense back in the Sixties than it does now. Those who wanted that pointless war to continue and therefore were willing to tolerate more troops dying were "supporting the troops." Those who wanted the war to end and wanted to save the lives of the troops were not "supporting the troops." Makes you wonder which side was really smoking too much marijuana back then.

Logically, every war falls into one of two categories: wars the nation should fight and wars the nation should not fight. It is understood that in either case, soldiers, sailors and pilots will lose their lives. The problem with wars that should not be fought is that we lose good people for no good purpose or for purposes that actually harm the nation. When this happens, the fault lies solely with those who launch the nation into war: the President and the Congress and their henchmen and handlers. The fault does not lie with those who expose the scam.

But what about the morale issue? Troops need morale to be sure. Morale is strongly correlated to the citizenry’s overwhelming support of the war. The citizenry overwhelmingly supports wars such as World War II that are a response to an attack or are (really) necessary for the defense of the nation. They will not for long support wars that are dreamed up by tiny elites that seek to use our troops as a private army to advance obscure private agendas. In short, if there is a morale problem, blame those who launched a war for the wrong reasons.

But please don’t shoot the messengers! They seek to correct the warmongers’ errors, save the lives of our troops, and end the war before it does even further harm to the nation. The real villains are those who, like Kissinger, Nixon, Rumsfeld and little Bush, plot to keep us in a war long after its pointlessness is apparent to any high schooler.

Though I suspect the President’s advisers have read von Clausewitz and Sun Tzu and who knows who, I wonder if they have read Emerson recently?

"The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word, because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loath to disappoint them. But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place? . . . A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do."
Because we are dealing with little statesmen and not great souls, we are in real danger. We are dealing with men and women who are maniacally cocksure of themselves (even after presiding over and dozing through the worst day in American history); Bush because he is overcompensating for his filial inferiority complex; his handlers because with their nimble minds they have hypnotized themselves into thinking they are infallible. Sorry Charlie, only one person has that portfolio (and he was antiwar).

So, the warmongers who got us into a big mess and whose egos and power lust will not allow us to get out of it, now resort to their old ploy — one that Goering described — that last refuge of a scoundrel: challenging the patriotism of the opponents of war to blind the people into continuing to support an unnecessary war that is killing Americans and stirring up anti-American sentiment in the Middle East. The notion that those who oppose this private war, fought with public lives and dollars, are not supporting the troops, is one more neo con.

Ironically, the administration’s shift from "humility" to hubris in foreign policy may unleash yet another terrifying weapon of mass destruction: "I, Hillary Rodham Clinton, do solemnly swear . . ."

September 23, 2003


The Best of James Ostrowski


Copyright © 2013 James Ostrowski

WILLIAM BLUM GOOGLE SEARCH DEC. 9, 2013, opening entries.

US ROGUE STATE KILLS HOPE AROUND THE WORLD

   Audiobooks ... www.amazon.com/William-Blum/e/B000APW3VO
   7 Results - Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II by William Blum, Peter Scott and Larry Bleidner (Jul 1995). (37) ...

2. Books – William Blum williamblum.org/books
   William Blum left the State Department in 1967, abandoning his aspiration of becoming a ... His book on U.S. foreign policy, Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA ...
Don’t protest the war, the senator said in his speech
It’ll be like Viet Nam- you’ll give strength to the enemy
Think about that soldier in his barracks bed alone.
But, I say:
Support our troops- bring ’em home
Support our troops- bring ’em home
Support our troops- bring ’em home
Felicia’s down in a carrier
in the US Naval Fleet
Filling vending machines all day-
where her fellow sailors eat
Her little girl wakes up here at night alone [repeat chorus]
Ted’s with the reserves two weeks a year,
& one weekend a month
Now it’s been 2 years away from his family
& the business that he runs
They hope the bank won’t foreclose the loan [repeat 1st line of chorus]
John signed up two years ago.
He’d be out in a few weeks.
Now they’re shipping him out overseas-
they’ll keep him in 6 months at least.
His young wife will give birth here all alone [repeat chorus]
They said that they’d defend us-
put themselves into harm’s way
Take a bullet to protect us, in combat any day.
Think hard before we send them to that zone.
[repeat chorus, & last 2 lines of chorus]
END SUPPORT THE TROOPS NEWSLETTER #2

--
Dick Bennett

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

Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

National/International Days
MY NEW EMAIL ADDRESS
j.dick.bennett@gmail.com
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703