



# VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

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Dear fellow activist,

Thank you for your incredibly generous support of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Because of you, we are able to help veterans, oppose the current wars, and support Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War all over the country are preparing to participate in anti-war marches on March 19th, the 8th anniversary of the Iraq War. In addition to the regular anti-war marches and rallies in Washington, DC and elsewhere, VVAW will answer a call from Iraq Veterans Against the War. IVAW has called on veterans and peace organizations to mobilize to Madison, Wisconsin to stand in solidarity—as a peace movement—with workers organizing for their rights.

**Vietnam Veterans Against the War members in the Midwest have been intensively involved in protesting Wisconsin and Indiana's attempt to weaken public employee unions.** A great many veterans work in the public sector. Many of our members have gone to Madison and some to Indianapolis to join the protests there. I myself have been to both cities, each multiple times. Red Kettenhofen of Milwaukee VVAW had gone to Madison ten times last time I talked to him.

**Because of you, Vietnam Veterans Against the War has been able to offer major financial support to the Iraq Veterans Against the War Field Organizing Program.** I am so happy to be able to tell you how far IVAW has come since the program began. In addition to speaking out against the wars, they have developed a sophisticated organizing strategy.

Inspired by the GI organizing that VVAW carried out, Iraq Veterans Against the War is pursuing a strategy designed to eliminate a crucial pillar of the US government's ability to carry out these current wars. That pillar is the consent of the troops.

It is a very common practice for the military to deploy soldiers who are already traumatized from previous deployments, a violation of their own regulations.

Because commanders are scrambling to find enough troops, they frequently overrule mental health professionals who say that individual troops are fit to deploy.

At least 20% of all service members who have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from Post-traumatic stress disorder. What would happen to the military's capacity if 20% of the troops could not be redeployed?

IVAW's strategy involves systematic outreach to active duty soldiers. After an outreach phase, IVAW will join these soldiers in putting pressure on local base commanders. When sufficient pressure results in local victories for IVAW's campaign, *Operation Recovery: Stop the Deployment of Traumatized Troops*, the campaign will go national. Targets will be national leaders who have the power to change the practice of deploying traumatized troops throughout the military.

Operation Recovery is in the outreach phase right now. Field organizer Aaron Hughes, whose salary you help support, worked with active duty soldier Kyle Wesolowski at his base at Ft. Hood. Aaron and Kyle went out almost every day to talk to soldiers about the deployment of traumatized troops. The soldiers expressed a lot of interest in learning more about the issues.

**VVAW actively participates in Operation Recovery** when our counselors, Ray Parrish and Johanna (Hans) Buwalda, support individual soldiers who reach out because they know that their trauma makes them unfit for deployment. One of our members traveled to Ft. Campbell to support public resister Jeff Hanks. Hans and Ray are actively supporting Jeff by phone.

**Ray, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War Military Counselor, told me a story about the personal suffering of Joe, a soldier who continued to be deployed after having been traumatized.**

Joe lived his whole life in a small town where he knew everyone. In the Army in Afghanistan, he was inserted into a unit that had been together for a long time. As the new guy, he went through a series of incidents of hazing. The hazing culminated when two fellow squad members who were high on drugs and alcohol raped him. He told a sergeant, but nothing happened.

He became depressed and was given medication. At one point he blacked out and was sent to the hospital. When he came to, he was "visited" by these squad members who threatened to kill him if he told anyone what they did. After that, he intentionally overdosed on his anti-depressant.

He did receive some psychotherapy, but he was sent to a different unit where he was terrified of another sexual assault. He isolated himself. He was then sent back to a US base where he began to self medicate by drinking heavily. He got into bar fights and was sent to rehab. When he failed rehab, he was given an other than honorable discharge for the fighting.

He went home and took a job. He had joined the Army to get education benefits, but now he had to give up his dream of going to college. He started doing meth amphetamine. In spite of everything that had happened to him, he still supported the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, during a successful drug rehab, he began to read, including a book by Noam Chomsky, and to watch movies about the war. He came to see the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan as wrong. He started to see himself and other troops and Iraqi and Afghan civilians all as victims of the war, even the men who assaulted him.

After he left rehab, he decided to go to the VA because he wanted to open up to someone but he was turned away because of his bad discharge. He was looking at anti-war web sites when he discovered the Vietnam Veterans Against the War site and Ray Parrish's articles about PTSD, one of which mentioned male victims of sexual assault. It was the first time he had ever heard of this happening to another male.

He called Ray and they talked for two hours. Ray explained that he could get his discharge upgraded and realize his dream of going to college. Even more than getting into the VA, he liked the idea that the Army could be made to recognize that he was entitled to all his benefits.

He hopes to hear from the discharge board by the end of the year. Meanwhile, he participates in anti-war activities. He is gratified to wear his uniform and be treated as an anti-war veteran by the anti-war community.

**Johanna (Hans) Buwalda, our veterans counselor, does so many things I can hardly begin to tell you.** She collaborates with the Soldier's Project, an organization of professional therapists who volunteer to see veterans and their loved ones at no cost. With the Soldier's Project, she has set up a monthly training program for therapists who work with veterans. She has given two introductory workshops. She has also involved VA staff, university professors, civilian practitioners and veterans as additional presenters.

She runs two groups for families and friends of veterans who need support. She now also works with the Civilian Medical Network and is on call for their organization one week per month and offers consultation for their staff and volunteers. She also receives calls from the GI Rights Hotline.

She takes calls day and night (as does Ray). When a caller needs therapy or a mental health evaluation, she looks for someone in his or her local area. For example Harold, a Vietnam veteran who had been homeless for a long time, called her. He had gone to the VA but was very uncomfortable with the counseling he received in that particular VA. Hans found him a civilian therapist in Detroit, where he lived.

The civilian therapist was also willing to work with Hans to learn how to write an effective mental health evaluation for a discharge upgrade for Harold. It made Harold happy that there were people who were willing to fight for him.

**The History Channel recently flew me to Pennsylvania to be interviewed for an upcoming series on Vietnam.** I talked about combat, about the Tet Offensive, about having my men die, about killing people, and about the guilt I have felt ever since. I spoke about the death of my nephew, Bobby (only one month younger than me) who was killed. I was pulled out of the field to escort his body home to my family.

They also covered my life in Vietnam Veterans Against the War, including my 1972 trip to

Vietnam when I lived through Nixon's 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi. Your continued support of VVAW helps us maintain a visible presence so that the critical role played by anti-war veterans and soldiers is not erased from history.

I hope you can help Vietnam Veterans Against the War continue to employ Ray and Hans and continue to support Iraq Veterans Against the War. Please make a tax-deductible donation so VVAW can continue to carry out its programs.

We have set-up a few new ways to make supporting VVAW easier.

- You can now give monthly sustaining donations to VVAW. Just go to our website, [www.vvaw.org](http://www.vvaw.org), to become a sustainer.
- We are also now accepting donations of stock. Support VVAW and possibly end up with a larger tax deduction at the end of the year.

Check the appropriate box in the coupon below to get us to contact you, if you have any questions.

I know you cannot contribute every time you receive one of these updates, but, if you are able to contribute, you can make a huge difference in our capacity to oppose the wars and to offer help to veterans in an anti-war context.

Sincerely,



Barry Romo  
National Coordinator

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<p>I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War <input type="checkbox"/>\$35 <input type="checkbox"/>\$50 <input type="checkbox"/>\$100 <input type="checkbox"/>\$250 <input type="checkbox"/>\$500 <input type="checkbox"/>Other to support its work for peace and for decent benefits for all veterans. Donations to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at <a href="http://www.vvaw.org">www.vvaw.org</a>, a one-time or monthly donation.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in making a monthly donation to VVAW, <input type="checkbox"/> email me or <input type="checkbox"/> call me to arrange this.</p> <p>Name (print) _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>City, State, Zip _____</p> <p>E-Mail Address (please print clearly) _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I would like to get more involved in VVAW: <input type="checkbox"/> email me <input type="checkbox"/> call me.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in donating stock to VVAW: <input type="checkbox"/> email me or <input type="checkbox"/> call me to arrange this.</p>
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