

## **Phoney VVAW and Flag Burning** **Open Letter to the Media**

### **To Whom It May Concern:**

On the 28th of October a number of TV and radio stations as well as newspapers carried, in various forms, a story of Vietnam veterans in Seattle burning 1000 paper flags to protest passage of the Congressional Bill outlawing

flag-burning. Some media coverage reported that the flag burners identified themselves as the organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

As President of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc, I can tell you that we have no chapter of our organization in Seattle and that any

group using our name in that location is lying.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War has spent 22 years building a reputation based on fighting for the rights of veterans and against a repetition of U.S. military ventures like the Vietnam War. Some of our members find flag-burning seriously offensive, though our organization has always stood for the first amendment rights which would allow any form of protest no matter how infantile or silly. Among other things, we fought in Vietnam for the rights of protest--and to be silly if that was the form of protest people wished to practice.

We trust you will do whatever possible to correct the erroneous information you helped to publicize. I realize that to you the problem is trivial, but we must spend considerable time and effort to try to correct the error.

Sincerely,

Peter H. Zastrow  
Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc

## **A Different View from Vietnam Vets** **Crisis in Panama**

Turn to page 10



# **THE VETERAN**

**Vietnam Veterans Against the War**

**50¢**

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**1990**

### **High School & Military Recruiters**

## **VIETNAM VETS TARGET WAR**

by Pete Zastrow

"Did you ever kill anyone?" "Did people try to kill you?" "How did you feel about it?" "Did you see any bodies?" "Do you have nightmares--or any of the other things that affect Vietnam vets?"

Questions, asked by highschool students of a Vietnam vet, begin as very specific, often personal, sometimes based on the fictions of the Vietnam War. As a class goes on and the answers pile up, there are better questions: "What can we learn from your experience?" "If the U.S. had all these great weapons and technology, why did we lose?" That is a question which the U.S. military machine is still mulling over almost 15 years after the National Liberation Front finally freed Saigon from its American controlled government.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War--which began in 1967 dedicated to bringing an end to the Vietnam War and doing what we could to prevent another Vietnam--sends members into high schools and colleges around the country to give students a glimpse of the past and to pass along some of the lessons we learned, often when we were only slightly older than the students to whom we are speaking (troops in Vietnam were younger than any other war and were typically 18 and 19-year olds).

I gave my first highschool talk as a recently returned Vietnam veteran in 1970; I talked to a class in current events. There was much I did not have to tell the students of 1970--hundreds of thousands of people of all varieties were in the streets protesting the war and when it was not the demonstrators bringing the war home, it was the nightly news. There were other differences for speakers: the day after my first highschool talk, I found the local gossip columnist writing about an "alleged Vietnam veteran" spreading "communist propaganda" in the schools.

Today vets are no longer invited to current events classes--instead we've become resource persons for history classes. And, given the treatment of the Vietnam War in highschool history books, it is a good thing we're there. You may remember from your highschool history, no matter what was current at the time: the most recent material, even if it is covered

in the books, always gets lost in the crunch of finishing up the year, and only a wise and extraordinarily well organized teacher could leave time to discuss recent events.

For VVAW members speaking to highschool and college classes is as important as anything we do. We've been doing it since we started as an organization, and probably will keep on speaking for as long as we can stay out of Veterans' Administration domiciliaries where old veterans are housed.

Of course classes differ: we talk in front of classes ranging from the affluent suburbs where kids can afford to be bored by the thought of having to spend time in the military to inner-city young people for whom the military is a real, and sometimes the only real alternative to a life on the streets.

Much of what we can say to today's students is based on our understanding of the military of which we were a part. What used to be called brainwashing is an essential technique of military training. "Brain-washing is exactly the right term: the mind of the military recruit is scrubbed clean of ideas, of individuality, of previous allegiances. Once clean and barren, then the recruit's mind is ready for whatever new material the military wishes to inscribe--the evils of communism, the unwavering obedience to orders no matter what, the basic inferiority of Asians (a favorite during training for those of us who went to Vietnam, but a technique equally useful for Nicaraguans or Panamanians or Filipinos or whomever is appropriate), and the vital importance of having boots so well shined

Turn to page 11



**P. O. Box 408594  
Chicago, IL 60640**



## **VVAW WITNESS TO HOT SPOTS**

**The New "Vietnam"**

**Philippines**

**PAGE 8**

**Racism, Repression in  
South Africa**

**PAGE 7**



**Greg Payton (left) of VVAW meets with former detainee and hunger striker, Sandili Thusi (center) just returned from South African police and Howard Clark of War Resisters**

**Nonprofit Organization  
U S POSTAGE  
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## Where We Came From Who We Are, Who Can Join

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR began in 1967 when veterans of the Vietnam war took up the cause of ending that war. Since then VVAW has continued to fight against unjust wars and military adventures, and for the rights and needs of veterans. Today VVAW stands firmly for peace and for social justice at home and around the world.

As the oldest organization based primarily among Vietnam vets, VVAW confronted the problems of post-traumatic stress among veterans early in our history; we took up the cause of testing, treatment and compensation for victims of Agent Orange poisoning, and still are fighting that battle which has grown to include use of dioxins around the country. We continue to believe in the rights of veterans of all eras to be treated with respect and dignity, especially by the government and Veterans Administration.

Although based on Vietnam veterans, membership in VVAW has expanded to include veterans and friends of veterans from all eras, all of whom bring their own ideas and perspectives to the organization. As the time of the Vietnam war recedes in history, VVAW members try to keep alive the lessons from that war. We share with others the hope that our children--and any of America's young--will never again have to fight a war such as the one we fought, and that the lives of our fiends who died in Vietnam will service to make another such venture more difficult. To that cause VVAW stands dedicated.

VVAW IS A NATIONAL VETERANS ORGANIZATION.  
DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.

### National Coordinators

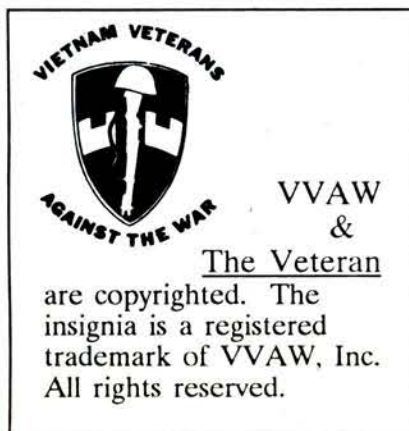
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## Membership Form

Fighting for Veterans, Peace & Justice since 1967  
National Office  
P.O. Box 408594  
Chicago, IL 60640

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Service \_\_\_\_\_ Branch \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Overseas Duty \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Military Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_

VVAW welcomes all people who want to join to build a veterans' organization to fight for peace and justice. Although most of our mem-bers are vets of the Vietnam era, we want all veterans of all ages--as well as interested non-vets--to join to help prevent more Vietnams. The initiation fee is \$5 to be sent to the National Office.

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local programs and projects under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to annual national meeting where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day organizational leadership and publishing of THE VETERAN.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

(Make checks payable to VVAW; all contributions are tax-deductible.)

## Join with VVAW Point Man of the Vets Movement VVAW Re-Up

Since 1967 VVAW has led veterans in the fight for peace and justice. We stood up to reveal the nature of U.S. crimes against the people of Vietnam. We held rap groups for veterans with post traumatic stress disorders 10 years before the VA started the same program. We were in the forefront of fighting to get benefits for victims of Agent Orange, a fight which continues today.

VVAW has been out in front when it counted. We catalogued the lies of the U.S. government in Vietnam--when the government said no U.S. troops had been in Cambodia, we had troop who had been there. When the Black population of Cairo, IL, were under siege by racists, we used our military experience to convoy food and clothing; ex-medics from VVAW used their military experience to start a clinic in rural Alabama. Again and again VVAW did things that others would not do, took up causes that others would not advocate.

In our almost quarter of a century, VVAW has seen members come and go--and many times come back again. Today there are many avenues for a vet who wants to see positive change in our neighborhoods, cities, country or world. In the late '60's, a Vietnam veteran who wanted change--who was an activist--joined VVAW.

We're asking VVAW members and supporters and friends to join us once again. The membership form is here in THE VETERAN; fill it out, please, and send it to us. Even if you've joined before, even if you've been an active member for years, let us know you're still there and still a member. We're creating new mem-bership cards--we'll send them out when we get the forms in.

VVAW has been able to do what we have done, to enjoy the reputation we have today, because of our members--because of you. We hope to hear from you once you get this issue of THE VETERAN: VVAW wants you: now!

## HELLO AND GOODBYE JUST THAT QUICK

### MICHAEL SOLBRIG

Last Spring, VVAW in Milwaukee got a call from an ex-Marine who was interested in becoming active in a vets group after being home 20 years. We invited him to join some of our chapter members in speaking to a youth group.

Michael Solbrig of Spring Grove, Illinois never missed a VVAW event after that Spring day. He told us at the camp-out that he was starting to "feel" again. But, problems sleeping were making him crazy. His memories kept him awake and when he finally did fall asleep, his nightmares woke him. He saw doctor after doctor. Their answer--drugs.

On January 3, 1990 we lost Michael. We will miss his wry, ex-Marine sense of humor and his enthusiasm for vets work (as well as his Marine Corps doughnuts at the camp-out!) He loved nature and longed for peace--in the world and within himself. Mike's struggle just proves once again that VVAW still exists for a reason--and we'll keep going! His wife, Maria, says he would want us to keep on. And, we will.

### FLORENCE McDONALD

Florence McDonald, 73, mother of long-time VVAW member and friend Country Joe McDonald, died in late June of cancer.

Florence's activism spanned much of this century. Her first demonstration was at the age of ten against U.S. Marines who were trying to crush Sandino's revolution in Nicaragua. Following her son to Berkeley in 1966 she became a leading member of Berkeley Citizens Action and served as city councilperson and city auditor before being elected to the rent board in 1986. Until recently, she was active on the City's Youth Commission, and volunteered several days a week on the City's Youth Commission.

Florence McDonald had great vigor and energy, which she devoted without reservation to her community, serving poor and working people. VVAW offers our sympathy to her family and her many friends.





# Justice for Just Us Rich

## Supreme Court "Justice"

by Pete Zastrow  
VVAW National Office

Of the many rotten legacies left to us by Ronald Reagan, the U.S. Supreme Court may still prove to be the nastiest. In the past several months, the Court--now under the direction of Reagan appointees or sympathizers--has clobbered Black Americans looking for justice under the law, smacked down women hoping to have control of their own bodies--and has given us the wholly irrelevant "right" to burn the American flag.

In the elections of 1980 and 1984, many progressive commentators pointed out that Ronald Reagan's supposedly conservative politics would not make all that big a difference from the politics of his opponent for the presidency. We would still support a bloated Pentagon, squander money on silly projects of the Defense Department, and do all the government could to keep the wealthy rich--and the poor even poorer.

The most perceptive of these commentators, however, did make one important point: a Reagan presidency would probably mean a shift in the Supreme Court since so many of the members were aging, and the result could be devastating. They were right.

A series of decisions have attacked the rights of minorities to use the courts to right various wrongs; in June, the court issued an opinion

stating that employees who were the victims of discrimination could no longer sue employers under an 1866 Civil Rights Law. A program setting aside a percent of city contracts for minorities was ruled unconstitutional; statistical evidence of discrimination was ruled inadmissible in another case; white fire fighters in Birmingham, Alabama, were given the ability to sue over "reverse discrimination" in a case which could mean years of law suits in cities which have voluntarily desegregated, and which could tie up affirmative action programs for decades.

In the most publicized of backward decisions, the Court upheld a law in Missouri which essentially restricts the rights of a woman to have an abortion if that is her choice. Adding to its attacks on minorities, the Court attacked the freedom of women.

The Court did not overturn *Wade vs Roe*, the landmark case which recognized that women must have the legal right to control their own bodies. The Court did not overturn the many civil rights cases giving minorities the rights to use the legal system to fight for equality; the attack is more subtle than that. Instead of making a clear statement the Court seems intent on chipping away, piece by piece, at the gains made by minorities and by women over the past thirty years.

The Court's decision in the Missouri case demonstrates how the Reagan Court is operat-

ing. Setting aside all the complex legalities and fuzzy moralities, the question is basic: shall a pregnant woman have the right to control what goes on inside her own body? For a majority of the American people (as high as 66% depending on which poll) the answer is that abortions should be available when a woman decides that is what she wants.

A barrage of stories about child abuse, about babies abandoned in churches or on street corners, about children having children, about children trying to grow up in wretched circumstances--all of these stories are pleas for the rights of a woman to decide whether or not to have a child. The hypocrisy of the so-called "right to lifers" who proclaim the rights of the "unborn" but will not support aid to welfare mothers or childcare for the poor or a whole array of programs designed to help young and poor mothers, this too speaks eloquently for the need of a woman to be able to decide for herself what is best.

No spokesperson for the "pro-choice" movement has ever said that any individual should have an abortion. As proponents of choice they believe individuals should make their own decisions. Only the anti-abortion forces feel they have been awarded the right to decide for others what they should do.

The media says that the Supreme Court has

**Turn to page 11**

## Reconciliation with Vietnam



by Arlene Wege

Monday, October 2nd: the 40th and last day of Alan Miller's fast on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, DC. Alan, a Vietnam veteran from Massachusetts, chose this dramatic form of protest in his attempt to build support for U.S. reconciliation with Vietnam, in particular, ending our government's 14-year trade embargo on that country.

Although the idea of undertaking a fast was first conceived a year ago, Alan's commitment was that much stronger after his return visit to Vietnam this summer. The delegation he was a member of visited clinics, hospitals and orphanages and donated material aid in the form of desperately needed medical supplies and equipment. The warm welcome and generous hospitality Alan and the other Ameri-

cans received from the Vietnamese, especially those who had suffered most as a result of the war, was not unique to their group; similar experiences have been reported by the growing number of American veterans who are returning to Vietnam. The purpose of the visits may range from fact-finding to building a clinic to establishing a cultural exchange center, but the underlying reasons are virtually the same: to finally come to terms with the devastating experience of twenty years ago.

Miller chose August 24th as the first day of his fast for a number of reasons, one being it marked the 20th anniversary of the day he was wounded and shipped out of Vietnam. After forty days of fasting he appeared fragile but reasonably healthy. His spirits were excellent, apparent from his many conversations through-

out the day with supporters and passersby and his ability to joke about the least likely topic--food.

At one point, a large cavalcade drove past and deposited some other important person at the opposite entrance to the Capitol. It might even have been the Chief of Staff himself by the reactions of the tourists who flocked to a nearby vantage point to snap and video until the cars made their impressive exit. When the same tourists wandered over in Alan's direction, their reactions to his protest were mostly confusion and avoidance. He was obviously very used to this, although it still did not discourage him from attempting to draw them into conversation.

At the end of the afternoon, the twenty or so friends who remained formed a prayer circle on the Capitol steps, Alan expressing his thanks for the support he had received throughout. Then the assembled group walked with him the half mile to a church where a traditional Buddhist meal had been prepared. Among those who shared in the celebration were Alan's wife, Nyshie; representatives from Guatemala, Japan, El Salvador, South Africa and Vietnam; a couple from Virginia; a family from Massachusetts; four members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War

New York/New Jersey; and Charlie Liteky, the fellow veteran who is taking on the next 40-day fast that will end of Veterans Day.

Liteky's fast will not be a new experience for him. In 1986, he and three other veterans fasted on the Capitol steps to pretest U.S. intervention in Latin America. That experience enabled him to provide much advice and support for Alan during his fast, and in turn, Alan will be devoting much time and effort to generating publicity and support for Charlie. It is hoped that the momentum will begin with veterans, individually and within their organizations; but since the American public is finally demonstrating its tolerance to look back at Vietnam, the time must come to realize how that country's future relates to them now.

Saturday, November 11th: the 40th and last day of Charlie Liteky's fast to promote U.S. reconciliation with Vietnam. Will another veteran take up the protest? Or will enough people care by that time to take action en masse so that one man does not have to take on the fight alone?



## On Guard Against the Guard

(The following article appeared in the *Chicago Defender* and is used by permission of its author, Robert Oliver; Oliver is now a member of the Illinois Air National Guard, applying for conscientious objector status.)

You're walking out to the recruiter's office with a fist full of literature. You read statements like "30 days of vacation annually, free medical care, free college education, training for a skill, travel worldwide for free or for low-cost, retirement checks after 20 years of service, free room and board." You think how many other jobs have these benefits? And the service just wants two to six years of your life, depending on which branch. And if you like it, you can stay. That's job security. Uncle Sam is not going out of business for a long time.

There are benefits to entering the military service. However, there are obligations you must consider before you sign your enlistment contract and take the oath. One fact about the armed services is that they are armed. Their purpose is to wage or prepare for war. It may be "peacetime" when you join, but you may find yourself in combat situations (as in a "police action"). You have no choice but to go where they order you to go. It won't matter what you think about current U.S. foreign policy.

Also if you are told to kill people, you kill people. Even people you feel personally or ethnically close to. You have no choice. Being killed is also a possibility. Consider this reality.

"It has good training to help me find a job when I get out." As to jobs in the civilian world, the military can help, but where can you find in the classified, "Help Wanted: infantryman, tank mechanic, mortarman, missile silo technician?"

In most cases there are no guarantees that you will find the job you want after you enlist. There are also no guarantees that you will find the job you want after you get out. Your choices can be limited. They will put you where they need you. That is their first consideration. They will also send you where they need you. It could be anywhere from the Philippines to Greenland. Think about it.

"Well, I'll quit if I don't like it." Quit? You signed a contract. You can't quit. You may ask for a discharge which may be denied. If you try to quit anyway, you can be declared AWOL. You can be court-martialed and punished under the Uniform Code of Military Justice; you can be sent to jail. You are under the control of your superiors 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You are always on duty.

"A Marine veteran told me it will make a man out of me." Military life is not adulthood and being on your own. You will find more people telling you what to do than when you were a child. You won't run your own life for awhile. You will belong to the U.S. government.

Advice: **Don't sign any papers.** Take them home and read them carefully. Let your parents read them. Try to get a lawyer to look them over. If the recruiter refuses to give you a copy of the enlistment contract, report him to your congressman. Also talk to recently discharged veterans, especially a Vietnam veteran, your pastor, friends, and relatives for advice. Take one of them with you when you visit a recruiter. A recent congressional study found that most people in the Army today feel that recruiters misled them. **Get the recruiter's promises in writing.** If you enlist, any promises **must** be on the contract.

If you feel the military is the only place that you can be all that you can be, talk to friends and neighbors about how they got their jobs. Also talk to guidance counsellors and teachers. They have connections to resources you can use. Don't forget neighborhood job counseling programs, church groups, and city and state employment agencies. Consider all your options.



**C**ome home with that coonskin on the wall."

—Lyndon Johnson,  
Cam Ranh Bay, 1966

**"America has never been defeated in the proud 190-year history of this country, and we shall not be defeated in Viet Nam."**

—Richard Nixon,  
April 1970

**"My God! My God! They're killing us!"**

—Ron Steele,  
Kent State freshman,  
May 1970

**"It has been a long and hard fight and we have lost . . . Saigon signing off."**

—Last message to  
Washington during  
Viet Nam evacuation,  
April 1975

## 20th Anniversary Kent State Join with VVAW

VVAW is looking for a few good men and women to join the organization. Since June, 1967 we have been fighting for peace and justice in Vietnam and around the world and decent benefits for all veterans and we can still use your help.

Friday, May 4th, 1990 is the 20th Anniversary of the take over at Kent State Campus, Ohio over the 1970 Cambodia invasion. Four students were killed, people were wounded and we want to make sure they are not forgotten. Just as we remember the over 58,000 men and women who died during the Vietnam War, as well as the 1,000s since the war. We cannot forget the many student protesters who died trying to end that war.

This year at Kent State University, Ohio, a demo-rally-memorial will be held and VVAW has endorsed it and will participate. The students are fighting for their own memorial on campus to the people who died and the university is fighting them on this. We want to support them and have participated in this annual observance before. In the early 70's there was a strong VVAW chapter at Kent headed by, among other, the late Michael J. Carmody. In his memory we would like to see a strong turnout.

Friday, May 4th, 1990—be there. East Coast and Midwest VVAW are the closest but we need all of you that can come or just send money. John A. Lindquist 1-414-963-0398 will be in tactical leadership so call or write if you want to come. For all of you not yet active in Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc., now is a good time to enlist or re-up.

Build VVAW  
On to Kent State  
John A. Lindquist



VVAW leading march at prior Kent State Anniversary.



# Phoney VVAW and "Revolutionary Communist Party's" VVAW A.I. Open Letter from NYC VVAW



First VVAW march in 1967 in New York City. Since then we've developed a international reputation. The RCP is trying to pimp off our political prestige and use the name identification to raise funds.

The following letter was sent out by the coordinating committee of the New York/New Jersey VVAW chapter.

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, the Revolutionary Union, which later declared itself the Revolutionary Communist Party, took progressive stands on issues such as ending the war in Vietnam, the rights of veterans, and the needs of minorities and of poor and working people. Because VVAW members agreed with many of these positions, VVAW worked with the RU (and RCP) on a number of projects.

As the 1970's ended, however, the RCP began to take positions which were further and further removed from reality and from anything of interest to anyone except the few members who still belonged to the RCP. VVAW found it necessary to make clear that we had no connection with the RCP cult, which is why VVAW eventually filed suit in a Chicago court to forbid the RCP from using and perverting the name of our organization.

In most places around the country the RCP does not exist and no one cares. In a few spots--notably the New York City area and some places on the West Coast--the RCP-dominated version of VVAW causes some confusion. To address that confusion, the leaders of the New York/New Jersey Chapter of VVAW wrote the following letter[ ]:

## BEWARE OF "VVAW-AI"

Recently, it has come to our attention that a handful of people in the New York/New Jersey area have been representing themselves as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War--"Anti Imperialist". This letter is to set the record straight regarding that outfit.

"VVAW-AI" is not a faction, caucus or part of VVAW. It is not affiliated with us in any way. "VVAW-AI" is actually the creation of the Revolutionary Communist Party, an ultra-left sect whose main activities appear to be to pump up the rhetoric level and disrupt any organization or movement they get involved in and to create provocations and violent confrontations at demonstrations whenever possible.

In 1978, after becoming politically isolated, a few of these clowns began putting out leaflets claiming they were the "real VVAW." At that time our national office initiated legal action and, in an out-of-court settlement, the frauds agreed to stop using our name and insignia.

For a long time these people dropped out of sight; recently they have resurfaced calling themselves "VVAW-AI" and hoping to cash in on the current veterans' peace movement. They have met with little success however and have been excluded from the Veterans Peace Coalition as well as last summer's Veterans Peace Convoy To Nicaragua because of their

dishonesty.

Their newly formed "NY-NJ Chapter" is nothing new either. Previously, the three individuals involved--Joe Urgo, Skip Delano and Dave Blalock--called themselves the Vietnam Veterans United To Prevent World War III, a mouthful of a name but not much of an organization. Now they have come up with this new scheme to pimp off of VVAW's history and continued activism. They recently put out a pamphlet claiming that there are "two VVAW's" in this area. They know this is a lie. None of them can even claim involvement in VVAW for over 10 years. Their purpose is obvious--create confusion and deception in order to promote themselves.

Our organization was formed 22 years ago when 6 vets marched under a banner declaring themselves to be Vietnam veterans against the war at a major peace demonstration in New York City. Within the next few years, chapters formed throughout the country and we became a national organization. We take pride in being the founding chapter and have continued operations in this area since that time.

Over the past few years, we have been conducting a successful program of having veterans speak to young people in the schools about the war and the military. We continue to fight for justice for veterans. We are active in the movement against the war in Central America. Together with Veterans for Peace, we sponsored "Big City," a 2 1/2 ton truck on the Veterans Peace Convoy which is now being used for housing construction in Nicaragua. Last December, two of our members went back to Vietnam on a national delegation, and we are working for reconciliation and normal relations between our two countries. We are part of the anti-apartheid struggle.

We are proud of our past and present efforts and intend to continue fighting against unjust war and for social justice. We are not interested in political infighting. We will not remain silent, however, when people dishonestly represent themselves and trample on the integrity of our organization.

We urge all progressive organizations and people to beware of "VVAW-AI" and hope that we have clarified any confusion they may have created.

Signed: Ben Chitty, David Cline, Clarence Fitch, Mike Gold, Greg Payton, and Steve Somerstein--the coordinating committee for VVAW NY/NJ.

## San Antonio VVAW El Salvador Solidarity

VVAW members of the San Antonio Chapter took part in a 1st of November protest demonstration outside the San Antonio Federal Building in response to attacks on FENASTRAS and CO-MADRES in San Salvador. They issued the following statement.

A month ago 82 U.S. senators voted to increase military aid to El Salvador to \$90 million for the coming fiscal year. This amount, along with the economic support funds and other economic assistance, means that nearly \$2 million a day in U.S. support will continue to go to El Salvador.

Over the past decade 70,000 Salvadoran civilians have been killed in a conflict that is

often called a civil war but which is more accurately described as U.S.-backed support of the status quo. In spite of thousands of assassinations and continued repression, the Salvadoran people have rejected a return to the status quo. They have worked and sacrificed to build a more just society and have repeatedly backed dialogue between the government and the rebels as a means of ending the conflict.

The destruction and loss of life at the offices of the National Trade Union Federation (FENASTRAS) and the human rights group (CO-MADRES) are the direct result of the continued military aid recently approved by Congress. The U.S. Embassy in San Salvador is also an accomplice in yesterday's slaughter because of its practice of describing trade and human rights groups as subversive.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, San Antonio Chapter, denounce the destruction and loss of life that took place in the October 31st bombings in San Salvador. The injured and dead are civilians whose only crime has been to organize for mutual support and for an end to the war in El Salvador. We call on the U.S. Department of State to investigate both bomb-

ings and to admit any role we may have had in provoking these terrorist actions.

In the days immediately preceding Veterans Day 1989, a fake VVAW crawled out from under rocks. Supposed to protest Congressional action outlawing flag-burning, these RCP sponsored goons first burned a thousand paper flags in Seattle; later in the week, members of the supposed VVAW turned up in Washington, DC engaged in various types of silliness.

VVAW has always fought for the right to protest in whatever form no matter how silly; we will continue to do so because the principle involved is far more important than the RCP or its supporters will ever be. If you should see these pseudo VVAW folks, see if you can find a Vietnam vet. They have one, maybe two, but that's it; their ranks are filled with high-schoolers.

Their stock in trade is gaining attention however possible, an activity common to other children. VVAW will take whatever steps are necessary to prevent them from misusing our name again in the future.

-VVAW National Office



## Review

# Born on the 4th of July

by Dave Currie & Barry Romo  
VVAW National Office

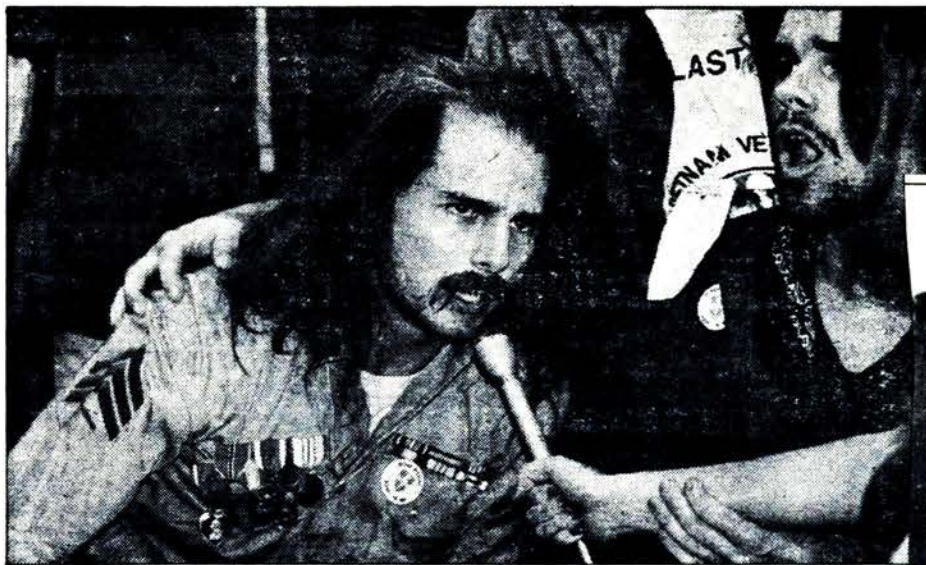
Seeing a vet in a wheelchair in a VVAW action was not unusual. In August 1972 outside the Fountainbleu Hotel in Miami, three vets in wheelchairs were collectively selected to serve as spokespersons for the rest of us. Their attempt to confront confident candidate for re-election Richard Nixon in his hotel was to serve as a test run for these three who would later foray into the Republican Convention itself. While one of these three, Ron Kovic, never got his face-to-face with Nixon, he permanently gained a place in the memories of us who shared those emotion-charged days. Perhaps, it was his appearance that made the memory of Kovic in Miami so unforgettable. The long-hair and Marine uniform only complemented that face so marked by pain and emotion. His every move betrayed an uncontrollable intensity, concern, and anger. Oliver Stone's creation of Ron Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July* on the screen evokes that same kind of emotion, intensity, and pain.

Kovic's life as a child, adolescent, and young adult are effectively presented in a collision of symbols, nostalgia, and promise for the future. Just enough confusion is portrayed to make the transition to Kovic as marine in combat in Vietnam easily believable. The realism of the Vietnam combat scenes often with the South China Sea as an almost surrealistic backdrop is especially noteworthy. Brutal mistakes in combat initiate a tragic erosion of Kovic's idealism. Kovic's psychological pain is expertly captured by Stone in two scenes that are drawn upon again and again as illustration of the depth of the kinds of personal scars that so many veterans carry with them. Tom Cruise is masterful in his ability to move his character through level upon level of personal hell without driving the viewer from the theater. Only Cruise's sense of the energy and frustrated hopes and ambitions of the disabled veteran makes his acting achievement possible. The VA hospital scenes defy description and stand as testament to what Vietnam veterans endured at the hands of the country they thought they were serving.

Unfortunately, all negative characters on the VA staff are depicted in the film by Black actors. In real life, the abuse came from all nationalities.

While Ron Kovic's personal growth and struggle are uniquely individualistic, they parallel the experiences of other Vietnam veterans. *Born on the Fourth of July* shows an America in the latter years of the Vietnam War that is seldom portrayed. Anti-war vets pushed away by a public that didn't want to see us. Vietnam veterans beaten by the police. When Stone has the vet pushing Kovic's chair in the convention hall turn out to be an undercover agent, he artistically reminds us of a veterans' movement that has been infiltrated and abused by a legion of undercover agents for over twenty years. The image of Republicans -- not anti-war demonstrators -- spitting on Vietnam veterans is one that many of know to be true and one that we hope will stick in the minds of the American public.

This brings us to what is missing in the movie version of *Born on the Fourth of July*. For all its vivid imagery, there is a general absence of detail when it comes to political growth and development. The movie Ron Kovic is suddenly transported to the Last Patrol's arrival in Miami. In the book, the emergence of Kovic's conscience and focus are more a purposeful process. He goes to demonstrations first as observer, then as participant. Fellowship with other veterans in VVAW plays an important healing role for the book Kovic. For this reason, we recommend the movie in the company of the original book.



## On the Air from Kansas City Veterans' Radio

Vietnam Veterans



RADIO NETWORK

WRN  
Kansas City, MO

If it's Friday afternoon in Kansas City, and if you tune your radio to the area's "Full Spectrum" community station just as the on-coming program's theme song is fading, this is what you'll hear:

"That's Martha and the Vandellas reminding us there's 'Nowhere to Run and Nowhere to Hide!' It's 1530 hours, and this is the VIETNAM VETERANS RADIO NETWORK, transmitting from Firebase KKFI, 90.1 FM, Kansas City, Missouri. I'm your host, former Airman First Class George Biswell, exploring the Vietnam War through Rock and Roll."

And so begins another weekly, half-hour installment of VVFN, a uniquely "coordinated" blend of historical reference, personal experience, and rock and roll music. The following are examples of VVRN's creatively scripted format:

"During the first three months of 1969 the U.S. 9th Marine Regiment conducted a large-scale Search and Destroy Operation in South Vietnam's northernmost province of Quang Tri. (MUSIC STARTS) The Operation was code-named Dewey Canyon ....the SONG--RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE by CCR

"In the summer of 1971, as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War were conducting their limited incursions into Congress called Operation Dewey Canyon III, an installment of the "Wizard of ID" cartoon went something like this:

The King walks into one of the Castle's conference rooms and asks an Advisor, "What's that noise?"  
"It's a group of Peace Demonstrators

marching on the Castle," the Advisor responds.

The King raises his hand, in very dramatic fashion, and demands, "Call out the Army."

The Advisor, learning out a window hole to check out the rumblings below, advises, "I don't think that would help."

"Why not?" shouts the King.

"The Advisor turns to the King, points over his shoulder to the window and says, "The group demonstrating IS the Army."

SONG--KICK OUT THE JAMS by the MC5.

"On February 22, 1974, the National Academy of Sciences reports that the ecological damage from the use of Agent Orange and other herbicides in South Vietnam may last more than a century."

SONG--NOTHING TO HIDE by Spirit.

Co-produced by VVAW members George Biswell, a former Air Force DJ, and John Upton, a former Navy Corpsman, VVRN began transmitting in July of 1989 and will soon be expanded to an hour in length. Biswell describes the program as "A thought-provoking and educational 'Vietnam Experience,' an idea that grew out of our shared feeling that something had to be done about the Vietnam War revisionism going on around us."

In addition to its on-the-air programming, VVRN also conducts a community service program called Operation Christmas Toys. "The Operation's objective," according to VVAW member and Project Director Wayne Pycior, a former Army Artillery Surveyor, "is to secure and distribute Christmas presents to children and grandchildren of Missouri's incarcerated veterans. The Operation is being conducted in cooperation with elements of the 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division (Reserves) and the Catholic Church's Social Concerns Office." Public service announcements aired by VVRN for Operation Christmas Toys end with this note: "No War Toys or Dan Quayle Dolls, Please."

For information on how to obtain the VVRN for broadcast on local community radio station, please call George Biswell at (816)483-0874, or write to VVRN, c/o Firebase KKFI, 1627 Main, Suite 300, Kansas City, MO 64108.



## From Saigon to Soweto

# Vietnam Vet Visits South Africa



Greg Payton  
NY/NJ VAW

The U.S. foreign policy which proclaims its interest in human rights and freedom wherever convenient around the world is the same policy supporting Apartheid in South Africa. The "strategic interests" of the U.S. are placed in front of human interests. Apartheid is tolerated and justified while the black majority in South Africa suffers. U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam was a racist policy and so is its policy toward South Africa, Central and South America and the Middle East.

As a veteran of the Vietnam war I was able to identify with the personal conflicts that come with resisting and serving in an unjust war. In 1987, I'd participated in a national tour of South African draft resisters that was sponsored by the War Resisters League (WRL) and featured members of the End Conscription Campaign which is now banned in South Africa. The ECC and VVAW had a lot in common. Through my involvement in VVAW and WRL I was asked by the Conscientious Objectors Support Group (COSG) to become the U.S. participant on an international delegation of anti-war activists to focus on the war in South Africa and the conscientious objection to that war by white South Africans.

After meeting with the WRL, the American Committee on Africa and the African National Congress, and talking with my family and friends, I decided to make the tour. Going to the Motherland has been a fantasy since childhood, but to go to South Africa, the country referred to by a friend as "the place where they eat niggers," caused anxiety and many sleepless nights.

I landed at Jan Smuts Airport, Johannesburg South Africa on April 28, 1989, with guarded feelings, not knowing what to expect. I was met by members of the COSG and taken into Johannesburg proper. My first reaction was to the intra-structure: this was a large industrial, modern city. Apartheid is very subtle and may go unnoticed to a tourist in Johannesburg. It

was not confrontational like the "Jim Crow" laws in recent U.S. history. The damage has been done and although 28 million blacks are the majority, 5 million whites rule.

My first three days in South Africa were spent being briefed about the tour and meeting the other delegates: Pieter van Reenan, from the Netherlands, a member of the Dutch Conscientious Objector Union; and Howard Clark of Great Britain who works with War Resister's International. We were to tour every major city speaking at public meetings and every prominent white university in the country. We would also go to many townships to meet grassroots leaders as well as a few prisons to meet jailed objectors. The more I learned about the tour the more excited and afraid I became. But many of my fears diminished when I came in contact with Laurie Nathan, a South African War Resister I had met during his U.S. tour in 1987. Laurie is now involved with the struggle for Namibian independence.

The tour took me to Capetown, Durbin, Pietermaritzburg, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown. I spoke at the University of Capetown, Witswatersrand U., the U. of Natal, Rhodes U., and Stellenbosch U. I visited Alexandria Township, Soweto, K.T.C., Chesterville and Crossroads, and Umlazie Townships. Before the tour these were just names of vaguely familiar places, but after seeing and interacting with the people, South Africa is now a reality in my mind and heart.

On May 1st, we attended the Congress of South African Trade Union rally at Witswatersrand University. This rally was impressive, very energetic and fiery. That afternoon we received word that David Webster, a law professor and progressive white activist had been assassinated. You could tell from the reactions of the people in the progressive movement that he was someone special. That night an impromptu memorial service was held for David Webster at Witswatersrand U. which was attended by more than 600 people. It was one of the most moving tributes I have ever attended; person after person spoke about Mr Webster's commitment to the movement and implored the audience not to let his spirit die. I was touched by this non-racial demonstration as he was eulogized by both black and white leaders.

The tour was launched with a press conference attended by Beyers Naude and Judy Bester, the mother of Charles Bester who is serving a six-year jail sentence because of his conscientious objection to the war.

In Capetown, I met Iwan Toms, a young white South African doctor (out on bail after serving 9 months of an 18-month sentence for refusing

to attend CAMPS--training after active duty in the South African Defense Force) who reinforced the commitment of white progressives who are working towards change in South Africa along non-racial lines. Dr. Toms headed the S.A.C.L.A. Clinic at Crossroads Township, the only doctor for some 50,000 black South Africans.

While in Capetown, I addressed a drug rehabilitation center, the Capetown Drug Counselling Centre, where I met Pieter Steinegger, a counselor doing alternative service (six years!). Speaking at a town meeting in Capetown was special to me, not only because Farid Esack (a Muslim Iman, an outspoken opponent of Apartheid) spoke, but because I was confronted by a South African Defense Force vet who was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and was drug addicted, and I was able to refer him to the Drug Rehab where I had spoken.

In Durbin, we stayed with Patty and David Geeodts. Patty is a very energetic older white South African woman who has been involved with the anti-apartheid movement for years. She was one of the primary organizers of the Black Sash, a white progressive women's organization. Pieter van Reenan and I spoke at St Jospehs, a Catholic High School and met with Archie Bumedu, one of the leaders of the United Democratic Front. We also met with Sandile Thusi, a student organizer, one of the 39 hunger strikers while in detention, who is now under restriction and house arrest. Such courage was not uncommon among young black South Africans.

I must say that speaking at Stellenbosch, an Afrikaans University that is the alma mater of P.W. Botha, was unnerving. Everywhere I spoke people related to my experiences as a Vietnam veteran and the effect war has on those who participate in it. There was almost always a conscientious objector sharing the platform with me.

Living in white South Africa was an unusual experience. It was very quiet. I never saw children playing in the street and most homes were hidden by high walls with barbed wire on top and alarm system signs displayed on the front gates. There was a constant tension in the air. In contrast, the children in the townships played and people laughed in spite of their problems.

One of the highlights of the trip was meeting Charles Bester, the 18-year-old conscientious objector who is serving 6 years for his convictions. South Africa has the harshest laws in the world as they relate to conscientious objection, and the international community intends to focus on South Africa in 1989. After driving for 3 hours to get to Kroonstadt Prison, we met with Charlie, as his parents call him, for 1/2 an hour. It was emotional to see such a young person imprisoned when all he needed to do was to compromise his values to be set free.

I also traveled to Pretoria Central Prison to visit Dave Bruce but his visitors were limited.

At a prayer service in Soweto's Orlando West section, I was overcome by the magnitude of my trip and the importance of black Americans and all Americans working for the change of a system that is not just strangling South Africa but ruining the planet.

It is my belief that Apartheid cannot stand much longer. When I spoke at public meetings I also listened. I heard mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers, often speaking out for the first time, stating that they never realized the effect that war has on everyone.

### Apartheid Has Oppressed The Oppressor

One Sunday morning, it was raining cats and dogs! I went into Alexandria Township to attend church service. After service I was invited to breakfast by a young black South African woman, Bapsj Masite. We had returned to church to hear the young people play the marimbas. As we left that program, the Caspiers (Army personnel carriers) arrived. My heart jumped into my mouth, I clutched my passport; the fear was intense. For a brief moment, I felt what living in black South Africa is all about.

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# Witness to the New "Vietnam"

## Philippines

by Barry Romo

Philippines--Col. James Rowe, a decorated Vietnam Veteran died here recently. He was shot in his 'bulletproof' car and killed instantly.

Unlike the return of the sailors from the Battleship Iowa accident or casualties from Persian Gulf, his body's arrival home was met by silence instead of by President Bush. Why was this author, former V.C. POW and head of the Joint United States Military Advisory Group met with singular indifference after it was confirmed his death was the work of Philippine insurgents?

Perhaps the answer lies on the island of Negros. Located in the south center of this Archipelagic nation, Negros has long had insurgent actions.

On April 18th elements of the NPA attacked an army outpost at Candoni, Negros, killing at least 9 soldiers and making off with their weapons. Three days later the military attacked, beginning with an artillery bombardment and aerial and helicopter gunship assault, followed by an infantry "search and destroy" mission conducted by army scout rangers.

Civilians in this rural agricultural area were warned of the assault two days after it began.

According to Lt. Col. Recarido Evidente, Civil Relations Officer for the Third Infantry Division, the military operation was "necessary to wipe out the guerrillas" and so the area was declared as "no man's land".

At least 35,000 peasants were forcefully evacuated from the area into unsanitary, overcrowded detention centers in southern Negros Occidental. Taking with them what few belongings they could--including pigs and chickens--they were housed together without drinking water or sanitation.

Brig. Gen. Raymond Jarque, deputy commander of Negros island command justified the actions as "part of war." "Evacuation must be part of the war or else it becomes an all-women's war."

While the military claims to have killed 41 NPA in combat, the Human Rights Alliance of Negros informed President Cory Aquino that government troops killed at least two civilians and tortured another:

Jesus Lahayfahay, 54, was shot dead in the back while lying on his farmhouse floor at close range.

They wounded a mother, Academia, and killed her 3 month old child in her arms as they sought shelter in a Protestant church.

They also tortured a farmer, Rico Cominade, 23, demanding the hiding place of weapons.

The evacuated civilians fared far worse than both the NPA and civilians left behind. More than 118 children and infants died from diseases caused by the overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions with the count still rising. For entertainment the military showed the refugees "The Killing Fields" at night.

Negros Gov. Daniel Lacson, Jr., was more concerned about the bad press coverage saying that the operations and evacuation were necessary and "a question of the survival of democracy." As for the evacuees complaints about housing he said he had been telling them "not to expect five-star hotel accommodations."

Cory Aquino, president and American "saint" has not stopped the evacuations or military operations. In a public relations ploy she sent her Health Secretary, Alfredo Bengzon to assess the displaced's needs but a bit more telling was her public talk to military officers at the height of the operation in which she called

for "total war."

In Negros she got "total war."

### Rowe's Job: Low Intensity Conflict

This brings us back to Col. Rowe, the body that President Bush Forgot to Remember. Well, Rowe is--or was--presumably an expert on Asian communism. His 5 years in a bamboo cage supposedly enabled him to learn more than anyone else and his escape after 5 years 'proved' he could outsmart them. He even made confidential films shown to military intelligence officers on the subject.

Rowe's final command, JUSMAG, is a permanent group of U.S. military advisors to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, part of the U.S. Diplomatic Mission in Manila but paid for by the Philippine Government. It's been around 40 years, and Col. Edward Lansdale, until now, its most illustrious operative.

It's job is directing the counter-insurgency program.

As such Col Rowe was a direct participant in and directed the development of low-intensity warfare in the Philippines. He is credited with the development of deep-penetration agents into the NPA, creation of armed anti-communist vigilante death squads such as Alsa Masa and evolving them into the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU's). Incidentally, these groups and Aquino have been criticized by human rights groups such as Amnesty International who note that rights abuses are worse now than under Marcos.

Bush did not Forget to meet Rowe, Quayle wasn't playing golf and CNN wasn't off the air.

There's a war going on here in the Philippines. Its real and we're directing, supplying and paying for it. If it sounds like Vietnam, if it looks like Vietnam, if it bleeds like Vietnam, hide it before the public finds out. To admit Rowe's death is to admit the war.

The question is not just one of advisors directing the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The Philippines was our first colony. We waged a war here at the turn of the century that took more American lives than the Spanish-American War (and one million Philippine lives). We claimed the Philippines as our prize for winning the war.

We herded the population into concentration camps then, too. In fact, the marine corps commander was relieved of his command by Roosevelt after massacres became known. He had ordered all males over the age of ten on the Island of Samar killed.

It's our last prize in Asia. It is place from where the U.S. military can project itself. Not that its our last base, but it is the right place with a large population, natural resources, semi-skilled labor who speak English. And we own it. Not in the old sense of Kipling's India, but in the "new" of World Bank and IOU-neo-colonialism.

### The Importance of the Bases

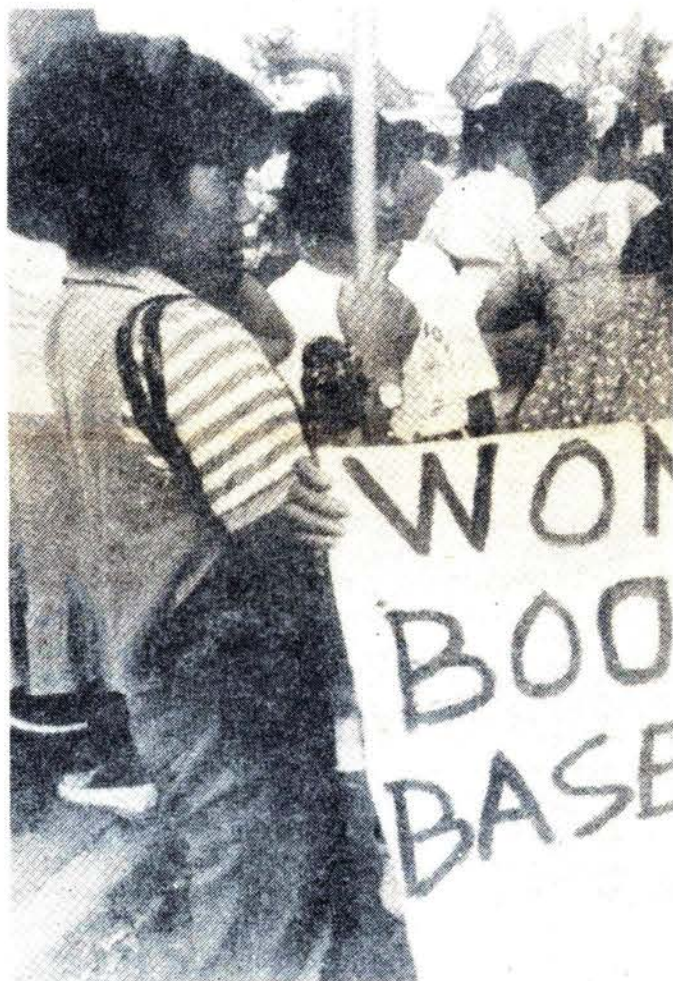
Which leads us to the bases--primarily those at Subic Bay and Clark Air Force Base.

While the 18,000 prostitutes aged 15 to 23 provide R&R, that's not the main draw. Subic is one of the best harbors in the world. It services the 7th Fleet, our largest with approximately 100 ships. Dry-docking and repairs cost 1/7th here what they would in the United States. The work force is skilled and can be expanded. The air bases can hit all of Asia (witness its use in Vietnam) and its Air Force

radar station can monitor soviet nuclear capacity. It takes up more land than Singapore.

In war they would evaluate the damage of our nuclear strikes against the USSR. While we have other bases, like Midway, none offer the area, position or workforce of the Philippines. Besides being a tripwire for nuclear war with the USSR, they are also a tripwire for war with the New People's Army. Americans and insurgents have already engaged each other with deaths on both sides (at least 3 Americans). Unlike other bases the U.S. controls the security has the right to follow the NPA right into Manila if it wants to. The bases also can be used to escalate our armed counter-insurgency.

Marines were sent to "protect" Da Nang and army airborne units to "protect" Ben Hoa.



*Filipino-American Friendship Day, July the Philippines. (Photo: Romeo Mariano)*

This place is no Grenada. There are 800 large islands with a population of 60 million. The insurgents have 30,000 armed men and women and carry out actions right in Manila. In many areas of the country side there is already dual power. Their infrastructure reaches into the schools, squatter communities, unions and even the church and the military.

Of course, comparisons to Vietnam don't totally fit. The NPA gets no outside help and is completely self-sufficient. There are no rear areas like North Vietnam or Cambodia.

And maybe the U.S. population was willing to buy an Asian war before Vietnam, but whose gonna buy "Hearts and Minds" in Manila?

Barry Romo is a National Coordinator for Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He was an infantry and intelligence officer in the Army in Vietnam. He visited the Philippines in May and June of this year.



# From Liberation TOUCHING BASE

The following article is taken from *LIBERATION*, the magazine of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines.

"Let us sit down and try to settle our differences by talks. And if we cannot, by all means, let us do so by arms."

It was a puzzling statement that Cory Aquino declared before the graduation class of the Philippine Military Academy last February 19. While seeming to indicate government's willingness to negotiate with its adversaries, it also showed an over-eagerness to fall back on the use of arms to resolve its conflicts with other political forces. Put simply, the sincerity of Aquino's openness to renewed talks was suspect. Nonetheless, the statement struck a responsive chord in the National Democratic Front (NDF).



1988. A protest day against US bases in

Three days after Aquino's speech, NDF official Satur Ocampo declared the revolutionary organization's willingness to once more explore common grounds for renewed negotiations with the government. That same day, NDF international representative Luis Jalandoni issued a statement from Utrecht, The Netherlands, suggesting the possible mechanisms by which such talks could take place.

A good starting point for talks, said Ocampo, would be the Aquino regime's position of the U.S. bases. "Maybe there can be a breakthrough if President Aquino makes a formal declaration that her government will not extend or renew the RP-U.S. Military Bases Agreement (MBA). That could possibly be a positive starting point.

For the NDF, it was the second time in two months that it declared its willingness to pursue the peace question. In its Christmas message ... the NDF said: "(We declare our) willingness to again explore with all sincerely interested parties the possibility of a comprehensive settlement of the political, economic, social and military issues underlying the armed conflict."

Earlier, groups such as the Coalition for Peace, had also raised the question of peace talks between the government and the NDF.

In an interview with *LIB*, Ocampo explained why the NDF has chosen the issue of the U.S. bases as a starting point: "During the 1986-87 talks, we tried to reach common ground through the question of land reform. But we have since given up on achieving a consensus on this issue. Subsequent events have shown that the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law or CARL falls short of the NDF's idea of what a genuine land reform program should be. We thought that perhaps there are other areas we could explore."

The immediacy of the bases issue made it a logical choice. "This is an urgent matter because the (RP-U.S. Military Bases) Agreement will end in 1991. The regime's stand on this issue could spell the difference between continuing U.S. domination vis a vis national independence. Thus," said Ocampo, "It would somehow change our view of the Aquino government if it would make a categorical statement that it would not seek a continuation of the bases agreement. Such a stand would pave the way for communication and exchange of ideas between the government and the NDF, about how best to work together for the national interests of the Filipino people."

Meanwhile, a number of groups and individuals have already expressed support for the NDF's peace initiative. In response to a proposal from Jalandoni, the PDP-Laban political party said it was willing to act as an observer to any peace talks that might take place. The Catholic Bishops Conference has also designated Bishop Antonio Fortich as the church's liaison person in case of negotiations. Sen. Wigberto Tanada lauded the NDF's announcement, saying that any effort to bring peace to the country should be welcomed. Sen. Joseph Estrada, an outspoken critic of the U.S. bases, said: "(The) Americans should dismantle the bases to bring peace to the country."

## U.S. bases: Instruments of war

As far back as 1969, U.S. Senator William Fulbright had already observed that American interest in its bases in the Philippines would cause the U.S. to "always resist any serious change in the political and social structure of the Philippine government." To the U.S., a Philippine government that is pliant to American dictation but repressive of nationalist movements is the best guarantee for the bases.

Thus, the growth of a strong mass movement towards the end of the '60s that called for the dismantling of the U.S.-supported Marcos regime seriously disturbed Washington. Marcos' subsequent declaration of martial law extended his hold on power, quelled open opposition to the bases, and caused the U.S. government to heave a sigh of relief. It therefore came as no surprise to hear U.S. officials who later came to investigate martial law conditions in the country admit that the "military bases and a familiar government are more important than the preservation of democratic institutions."

Just as the United States propped up the repressive Marcos regime for two decades, it is now actively supporting the Aquino regime's brutal efforts to suppress the progressive and revolutionary movements in the Philippines, which see the U.S. bases as the most concrete manifestation of U.S. neocolonial rule in the country.

Much of the AFP's wherewithal for repression is derived directly from the presence of the U.S. bases. For one, the Military Bases Agreement specifies that the Philippine armed forces would

be guided and directed by a permanent advisory group of U.S. military officers called the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group of JUSMAG. "It is U.S. military advisers who have taught the AFP how to become more systematic in its use of the most brutal methods of terrorizing the people," said Ocampo. "Hamletting, forced evacuations, mass arrests and raids on barrios are standard counter-insurgency measures derived from the U.S. experience in its war of intervention in Vietnam. Now, these measures are being applied intensively in the Philippines."

As part of the compensation it pays the government for the bases, the U.S. also supplies the AFP with weapons and other war material. The extent of U.S. anxiety over the growing insurgency can be seen from the new compensation package approved after the 1988 review of the MBA: of the \$260 million earmarked for military and economic support, \$200 million are in the form of "military assistance," an amount eight times bigger than the \$25 million Marcos received in 1983. On the other hand, the Economic Support Fund is down from \$95 million in 1983 to \$60 million in 1988.

The realignment of components in the bases compensation package can only point to the U.S.' negation of the deeper roots of the insurgency. Instead, it is determined to pursue a militarist strategy to defeat the revolutionary forces. In enhancing the AFP's capability to escalate its unjust war against the Filipino people, U.S. imperialism and the U.S. bases stand as the biggest stumbling blocks to peace.

"But the attainment of peace is not just a question of booting out the U.S. bases," said Ocampo. "The bases serve as the main instruments for maintaining U.S. hegemony over the country's military, political, economic and cultural affairs. For example, with the bases here, the U.S. is able to dictate economic policy through the IMF-World Bank. The IMF-

World Bank aims to perpetuate a neocolonial economy whose inequities lie at the root of our people's poverty. Poverty is at the heart of massive unrest. Because of this, our people are rising up to fight. Thus, the removal of the bases," he said, "will have far-reaching implications."

"We see the Aquino regime as a tool of U.S. imperialism. Like the Marcos regime and all other past regimes, its political, military, economic and social policies are being dictated upon by the U.S. However," Ocampo stressed, "a clear-cut statement from Mrs Aquino that the bases would go after 1991 would be a departure from the now established pattern of dictation."

Unfortunately, initial reactions from the government have not been encouraging. Spurning the NDF's offer, Aquino said, "They must surrender first." Former government peace negotiator Teofisto Guingona remarked, "The NDF is in no position to make conditions." House Speaker Ramon Mitra, who also represented the government in the 1986-87 peace talks demanded that Ocampo first present his "credentials" to prove that he was authorized to speak for the NDF. Days later, Aquino modified her position but remained essentially opposed to the holding of talks "because no formal offer has been made" by the NDF.

The answers are a disturbing echo from the past, when the first round of peace talks collapsed after the government insisted that the NDF disregard its own political program and bow to the will of the government.

"If the Aquino government persists in side-stepping the issues we have raised by citing all sorts of technicalities and peripheral questions," said Ocampo, "then there is no immediate need for us to go to the negotiation table. Meanwhile," he continued, "the NDF will go on working for the political unity of the broadest numbers of our people. It is only through this that we can be rid of the bases. It is only through this that a just and enduring peace can prevail in our land."

--Nicole Felipe



## Same Old Yankee Imperialism

# Panama Crisis

By Pete Zastrow

I was part of a group of 120 North Americans who participated in an international conference in Panama City at the end of November. The gathering took place just six weeks after the last coup against Manuel Noriega had failed and just three weeks before the U.S. invaded.

General Noriega spoke to our meeting. So did Panama's Provisional President Rodriguez and many other officials, journalists, businessmen and academics. Several put forth a common concern for the future: the economic hardship suffered by the people of Panama as a result of U.S. sanctions, they believed, would lead to trouble.

One scenario envisioned that some U.S. military person might be shot by an angry Panamanian citizen. In turn, this would serve as the necessary provocation for the U.S. government to do what it most wanted to do: invade Panama.

For me, the uncanny accuracy of this prediction put an accurate spotlight on what I would later experience as the misinforming role of the U.S. media. While misinformation has always been a crucial part of the U.S. economic war against Panama, the barrage of lies, omissions and wholesale pandering to U.S. government policy was particularly rampant throughout the coverage of the U.S. invasion. Here are some items that stood out:

**On 'Fair' Elections.** Last May, Panama held general elections. The U.S. admits to having spent \$10 million of our tax dollars to influence the outcome. According to knowledgeable Panamanians, that means at least three times that amount was spent. U.S.-sponsored thugs were involved in massive fraud, including stealing ballot boxes.

The final tallies from the election never surfaced. Noriega declared the election void because of fraud. The U.S. declared that its candidate, Endara--now the U.S.-sponsored President of Panama--was the winner. The entire electoral commission, headed by a woman lawyer and including people from all segments of Panamanian society, spoke to our conference in support of the cancelling of the elections.

**The Bloodied Opposition.** The most famous picture from the election period in Panama--one which was published again and again to build support for the invasion--showed Vice Presidential candidate "Billy" Ford covered with blood at the hands of the "Dignity Battalions" (essentially, the peoples' militia). The blood came not from Ford but from one of his bodyguards who had drawn a gun on the local people.

**The Danger to the Canal.** Bush and others spoke of threats of terrorist activities. But the Canal is almost indefensible; one ship sunk and it could be closed for months. Panamanians say that the only defense for the Canal is to surround it with Panamanian citizens for whom the Canal is both vital and politically untouchable.

The Canal was built by the fathers and grandfathers for the present Panamanian population. Even the suggestion of a Panamanian harming their Canal is unthinkable. In fact, the only time the Canal has been closed in the past 70 years was during the week of the U.S. invasion, when the U.S. shut it down.

**Noriega, the 'Narco-terrorist.'** This is the biggest misinformation of all. Noriega became known as a drug dealer only after the U.S. government, in the person of "indicted" Irangate conspirator Admiral Poindexter, ordered Noriega to help in the U.S. war against Nicaragua. When Noriega said no, he was no longer the darling of the U.S. government (even though he had a sheaf of letters from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency testifying to his fervor in the war against drugs).

I'm sure Noriega is not a nice person--although it doesn't hurt any of us to remember he is only "indicted," not convicted of the drug-dealing charges. It is likely that he was at least hip-deep in CIA muck for years, especially at the time George Bush ran that Agency.

But Noriega is not the primary issue. The



*Panama City's bombed-out El Chorrillo district.*

main point is, what business does the U.S. have in invading another country? We didn't invade Romania to get rid of Ceausescu; we didn't invade Chile to do in Pinochet; we didn't invade Cambodia to save it from Pol Pot.

The U.S. government has been fighting an economic war against Panama for years. Simply, the country was being economically strangled. GNP was down 40% because of U.S. sanctions. U.S. corporations--of which there are thousands doing business in Panama--were forced by the U.S. government to withhold U.S. social security and other taxes from the pay of their workers.

The Panamanian economy is tied to that the U.S. because of a close association for many years; Even Panama's paper money is U.S. money, for instance.

The people hurt most by the economic sanctions did not include Noriega. For instance, we visited a clinic an hour's drive from Panama City. The facility was part of a system which had built clinics in each province--110 in all; this clinic had five doctors and several nurses. When we arrived, the doctor we were looking for was out paying house calls on the elderly of this village, a luxury not enjoyed by most North Americans.

While the clinic was performing its duties, its pharmacy was bare. The medicines used to come from the U.S. but now were not allowed because of the sanctions. According to the head of the clinic, the people of the village were given prescriptions for medicine, but since they could not afford to buy it elsewhere, they just went without.

"Economic warfare," said one Panamanian official, "which kills children through malnutrition, is just as much war as if you killed them with a bullet."

Three weeks later the U.S. was killing children with bullets, too. Part of the reason, according to President Bush, was because the Panamanian parliament declared that "a state of war existed between the U.S. and Panama."

The U.S. military and government said they expected troops to stay in Panama as occupation troops for three to five days. Now the occupation is open-ended. As was the case in Vietnam, no one seems to have asked, what does it mean if we win? If we had "won" during the Vietnam War, would we still have

troops there 15 years later? Probably. And now in Panama?

I cannot predict a guerrilla war in Panama. There is a strong middle class which might enjoy a period of economic stability and the return of U.S. investments.

But in the speeches I heard and in the expressions of the people I saw and met, these was a fierce devotion to Panama. That devotion went beyond any loyalty to Noriega and stood instead for national independence. I suspect that devotion will cause serious problems for the U.S. occupation forces and for the U.S.-installed government.

All in all, the performance of U.S. newspapers and TV during the invasion was shameful. Tough questions were never approached. While TV viewers in other parts of the world saw images of Panama City in flames, looking like the war zone it was, here in the U.S. we saw wounded American troops coming home. A truthful depiction of how the people of Panama were dying because of the invasion was neither spoken nor shown.

Even now, we are still asking just what was our reason for being there, anyway? No doubt a lot of it has to do with Bush wanting to discard his image of timidity--and for that, North American and Central American young people have to die.

Much of the reason seems centered on the Canal. According to the treaty signed by President Carter, the Canal reverts to Panamanian control at the beginning of the year 2000. Since it is hard to disregard such treaties, Bush wants to make sure that the Panamanian government in charge at the time is friendly to the U.S. If we can't control the Canal directly, we'll do it indirectly.

I'm sure the Panamanian people will survive all of this. They are a remarkably peaceful people, perhaps because there has been little reason for war in many years. So far as I could tell, even their video games seem mostly nonviolent, and the shelves at a children's toy store did not overflow with toy weapons.

Here in the U.S., the fight against the intervention will grow. There were a few congressmen who did not buy the media blitz. More will follow, as more of the North American people see how wrong their government is.



Continued from Page 1

## High School and Military Recruiters

that you can see your reflection in them. That spit-shined boots become as important to the recruit as his family ties is a measure of the effectiveness of the military brainwashing techniques--but that is hardly surprising: the military has had a lot of years to perfect their work.

Other aspects of the military are crucial when talking to young people. Perhaps only since the Vietnam War has it been possible to underline the uses of the U.S. military; the Vietnam War is, of course, the prime example of how the U.S. military becomes a tool of a foreign policy dictated by economics rather than compassion or morality or even concern for the people of other countries. As Vietnam veterans we can walk into a classroom and announce that the Vietnam War was wrong, was immoral, was an exercise in putting the power of the U.S. military on the wrong side and attempting to squash the ambitions and desires of the people of the country. It was then--and still is today--their country and it has never been our right to make the decisions for the people who live there.

This point easily meshes with the present: when it seemed possible that the U.S. would step up pressure against Nicaragua to the point of a conceivable military adventure there, we could use the Vietnam War as the scale against which to measure U.S. actions. Today when the U.S. military squats with all its might in the Philippines, while the people of that country struggle against U.S. bases and all they represent, shows a continuing example of

what students can apply from the Vietnam experience. Who knows which international powder keg will be next to ignite? What we can safely predict is that the U.S. government's reaction will ignore the lessons from Vietnam unless people remind their representatives of what happened--and students are a vital part of this process as they have been in country after country (including the U.S. during the Vietnam War and China in the recent past).

If students have some understanding of how the military operates and how the military is, or might be, used, vets have made a useful contribution. But part of what we must do involves seeing the relationship between the military and young people. When your TV set blares out the message about "Be All That You Can Be," or anyone of the numerous other advertisements for the military that our tax dollars are buying, there is more at stake than the simple "serve your country" you see on the screen. Some of it is simple lies: surveys have demonstrated, for instance, that only 12% of veterans make any use of their military experience in civilian life which doesn't say much for the military "job training" that is advertised. As we used to say when we got out of Vietnam and couldn't find a job, "How many jobs are there for helicopter door gunners?"

There is, however, a more subtle message in all these ads and in the military's approach to youth. For years--maybe since the Revolution and certainly since World War II--the military has been seen as a way for boys to become "men." In some ways a primitive rite of passage takes place (in the public mind): if you spent a wild and slightly errant youth, you need to spend some time in the army to grow up. For boys and increasingly for girls, here's a way to repeat the experience of your father, to

be able to fathom the mysteries of risking your life for your country and to belong to something important.

Although VVAW members do not go into the school primarily as "counter-recruiters," explaining some of underlying facts of the military have the effect of creating some questions in the minds of the students--they should! And if we are talking in a school where a large percentage of the students are likely to end up in the military, we can at least give them the basis to ask some questions themselves. If nothing better there are parts of the Military Justice Code--the "UCMJ"--which provide individual soldiers with some ability to fight back against their officers (those these provisions of the rules are seldom mentioned during basic training).

Our ability to open the minds of young people to the uses and techniques of the military depends to some extent on our ability to talk about Vietnam; that is why we are invited to classes to speak. Our being Vietnam vets gives us a credibility which others do not have--and our entrance ticket into class. In reality that credibility should be much limited: as almost any Vietnam vet can say, he or she saw only the tiniest piece of the war and while that may provide some useful and telling stories, it does not unfold into a full-fledged analysis of the U.S. experience in Vietnam. Early on we learned that the credibility of being there was just as great for right-wing veterans or for military lifers who were trotted out to show support for the war.

It didn't take long to learn that we needed not only to have the experience of being in Vietnam but also knowledge about the war, about the history behind the war, about the forces involved. When, for instance, we know that over 100,000 soldiers from the National Liberation Front and from North Vietnam are still listed as Missing in Action--soldiers whose bodies were never recovered in their own country--it provides a telling comparison with the relative handful of American troops still listed as MIA's and whose return gives the U.S. government a continued rationale for keeping Vietnam in diplomatic limbo by refusing to restore normal diplomatic relations.

Information is especially important at present since, for pretty much the first time, we are facing students who are children of Vietnam vets. Remarkably, they often know only that their dad--or perhaps uncle or close friend of their parents--was in Vietnam but little more. Vietnam vets did not, for many years, talk much of their experiences and many of us still do not.

Several students have asked questions which they have hoped would provide them a way to talk to a relative about his war experience.

CCCO, from their national office in Philadelphia, sponsors an "Ask A Vet" contest in which they give prizes for the best responses to a conversation with a veteran. I've had the opportunity for several years now to help judge the contest, so instead of seeing the winners, I've seen all the entries in one or another of the age categories. Although CCCO provides lists of veterans who have agreed to talk to students, each year a number of the students have talked to their own fathers--and in several cases, it is the first time their dad ever really discussed his Vietnam experience with his teenage child.

If anything, the ignorance of what war is like reinforces our need to continue to speak to highschool or college students. Rarely are we able to keep a kid determined to enlist in the military from enlisting; we can, however, prepare him or her--and all the students who will not go into the military--to ask some questions. When most of us first heard about Vietnam there was already a war going on; today, with enough questions from enough people, getting the next war started will far more difficult. We hope so.

## Continued from Page 3 Supreme Court

not overturned *Wade vs. Roe*, the landmark case that allowed women to decide what should happen to them. And the media is correct; the Court is whittling away at the decision, not overturning it. The government--and the Supreme Court--are well aware of the outburst of anger that would erupt should the right of abortion be stolen from women. Far better, they believe, to take away a little at a time and the outcry will be less, the media--even the most progressive members of the media--will concentrate on all the rights which are still available, and piece by piece women's rights will be eroded and erased.

Students of American history will recall that the U.S. Senate was designed by the ruling elite of that period to curb the excesses of the House of Representatives; since the House was elected every two years, members were far more likely to be affected by the wishes of their constituents; Senators elected only every six years were further removed from the wishes or whims of the electorate. The Supreme Court was much further removed; there was no recourse for their decisions and to replace lifetime appointed justices was--and is--nearly impossible. Exposing themselves to a group of tourists along the Capitol Mall would be needed before Supreme Court justices could be replaced.

As a result the Court can operate in a realm divorced from the real world. Justices do not have to think about or see the children of poor women born because there is no alternative.

A majority of Supreme Court justices do not have to confront minority workers wanting to keep their jobs or trying to make up for years of neglect. According to the system, in another 20 or so years, the Court will again reflect the wishes of the people: how many unwanted children will die first? How many minorities will be unable to work?

Many forces will be at work to deny the Supreme Court decisions. No one can possibly believe that when the Supreme Court overturns the rights of women to abortion, abortions will stop--they didn't stop before they were "legal" because legality is not so important when abortion is a necessity. Perhaps enough pressure can be brought to keep the Court from the final decision; perhaps minorities will keep up the support for the cause that will allow them to triumph despite Court decisions.

Huge demonstrations have taken place already; there will certainly be more. Even though the Court is supposedly immune to such public outcry, we must keep trying. In the long run we know that progressive forces will win, that women will be free and that minorities will be able to realize equality; all we can do is to fight to make that happen as quickly as possible.

But the Court did leave us something from their 1989 term: flag-burning has been declared legal! So outraged are various representatives that a flag amendment is well on the way to passage (debate still burns about whether a law will be adequate or whether an full-fledged constitutional amendment will be needed to protect the flag from rabble-rousers and ne'er-do-wells). A flag has a better chance of protection from the present Congress than do women or minorities.

Perhaps the eruption of silliness that greeted the flag decision will pass over and be forgotten. It's difficult to watch our tax dollars spent on Congressmen and women who can find nothing better to do with their time than declare their undying devotion to the American flag. Once their breasts are sufficiently beaten, maybe they will be able to turn their attention to women and minorities who need their help.





## Navy Vets View

## Battleship "Safety" Vs. Sailors

The following article was written by Ben Chitty of New York VVAW; Ben spent 1965-1969 with the U.S. Navy, including two tours to Vietnam.

For a while this spring, it looked like the U.S. senior military service might go down without engaging any enemy. Fresh from the accidental destruction of a civilian airbus over the Persian Gulf last July, this April, the U.S. Navy reported three fatal shipboard incidents in quick succession--first, an explosion in one of the gun turrets on the battleship USS Iowa on April 19th while on training maneuvers off Puerto Rico; then, a few days later, a fire on a forward supply ship in the west Pacific; and, finally, two men lost overboard from a submarine in the Sea of Japan.

The Iowa tragedy dominated the news for almost a week. Five men died instantly, incinerated in the explosion of 660 pound of "Navy Cool" powder in the chamber of a 16-inch gun. Another 22 men were smashed about by the force of the blast, and seared to death by the heat. Still another 20, unlucky enough to survive the first few moments, asphyxiated as a toxic fireball sucked the oxygen from the ruptured compartments below the turret. There was so little left of some of these men that the Navy figured out that 47 died by mustering the ship's crew and counting who was still alive.

Officers, officials and politicians joined members of the families of the dead and injured to meet the ship at the dock in Norfolk. Seven thousand attended the memorial service. President Bush eulogized those who died "for the cause of peace and freedom." He personally walked past more than 200 of the nearly 400 family members present (his staff explained that he thought he had seen all of them). And the questions began. Could the Iowa be repaired? Are Navy ships safe? Are the costs and risks of running a battleship justified? What--or who--was to blame? All good questions, all with controversial answers.

The antique 16-inch guns, designed to throw a 2700 pound shell almost 24 miles, were state-of-the-art when the Iowa was launched in 1942. They can't be repaired. The Pentagon made a pitch for replacing them with Tomahawk missile launchers at a cost of more than \$1 billion a ship (counting the missiles themselves). More urgent questions about the potential for accidental or unplanned detonations were raised by opponents of the Navy's nukeport plans for New York (where the Iowa will be stationed) and San Francisco. The Pentagon devoted hundreds of hours, thousands of words, persuading skeptics that a similar catastrophe probably can't happen in port. But the most important questions--How did it happen? What's the point?--developed in very different ways.

After initial speculation about improper loading procedures, or over-age unstable powder, the Navy's investigation focussed on a lurid tale of homosexual passions, morbid jealousy, and psychotic revenge. One of the dead men, it seems, had named a shipmate beneficiary in his life insurance policy. Could this be a case of murder? So, they checked this theory out and made life so miserable for the beneficiary that they had to transfer him off the ship. Finally, the Navy retracted the murder theory, announced the innocence of the reported suspect--who turned out to be married--and proposed suicide to explain the tragedy. A sailor, they suppose, distressed when his advances were rejected by a couple of sailors, may have set off a bomb.

At least four things can be said about this theory. First, the story is a little unlikely and almost completely without supporting evidence.



Second, while homosexuality is common enough in the Navy, such spectacular suicidal slaughters are not. Sailors usually go nuts with a knife, not a bomb. Tight, enforced discipline is required to run a ship. If a sailor becomes isolated and depressed enough to blow himself up, along with 46 of his mates, surely someone should have noticed a problem and done something. Third, the timing is suspiciously convenient: fifteen days after the Iowa explosion, a federal court of appeals in San Francisco ruled that the Army must reinstate Sergeant Perry Watkins, an avowed homosexual who has already served 14 years. A good time to show that homosexuals in the military can be killers because they're homosexuals! Finally, the theory lets the Navy off the hook. If a single deranged individual who should never have been allowed to remain in the service killed all these men, then it's a tragedy, but really an accident. In a well-run Navy these things don't happen.

But they do. Ships are military installations. They are supposed to be dangerous and deadly. So what is a battleship for? For more than a decade after World War II, no battleships were active in the fleets. As the U.S. war in Vietnam heated up, the Navy brought the USS New Jersey out of mothballs and deployed it to Vietnam. The admirals found (as they hoped) that a battleship is a cost-effective and relatively safe platform from which to deliver massive firepower on a coastal area. "Cost effective" is clear enough: even at \$80 million a year in operating costs, a battleship is cheaper than an aircraft carrier. "Safe" is more questionable.

Designed to survive exchanges with Japanese guns of equal size, a battleship is just about unsinkable. She is built to limit the damage from any number of hits; on the Iowa, the blast and fireball were confined (and compressed) to the turret itself. But big and slow as she is, a wagon is easy to hit by missile from the air or torpedo under the surface. In fact, the safety really lies on the enemy's weapons: battleships remain "safe" only as long as the enemy uses only conventional weapons. Let's see now: who is likely to be threatened or attacked by the U.S. who has only conventional weapons? Everybody except Britain, France, the Soviet Union and China (and probably Israel and South Africa and Pakistan and India).

When Ronald Reagan began to beef up the U.S. military machine, he asked Congress for

four battleships, a weapon with a specific and limited use. The ship is an imperial weapon, meant to extend and maintain imperial influence over less developed countries. Its main use is "political," to display U.S. determination and power. In fact, Reagan only used the weapon once. When Moslem militia in Lebanon began sniping at U.S. Marines, he sent the New Jersey to bomb the hillsides of Beirut. The sailors on the Jersey were safe all right, but not the 260 Marines killed by a car bomb attack on their headquarters-barracks building near the Beirut Airport at dawn on Sunday, October 23rd, 1983. The experiment was not completely a success, at least not in countries where pacification requires occupation.

But Reagan somehow managed to speak part of the truth in 1983. Gazing sincerely into the TV camera, he said "We're a nation with global responsibilities. We're not somewhere else in the world protecting someone else's interests; we're there protecting our own." A couple of months later, responding to a Congressional report critical of the Marines' security procedures in Lebanon, he admitted, "If there is to be blame, it properly rests here in this Office with this President. And I accept responsibility for the bad as well as the good." But even in truth, he managed to lie. With the thoroughgoing cynicism of the fundamentally irresponsible, he failed to mention that these deaths came during the application of an ambitious and deadly policy. The Marines didn't aim to die in Lebanon--the U.S. aimed to make Lebanon safe for Americans and American influence. As commander-in-chief of an imperial military force, he was responsible for the policy, and he made the decision to apply the force: he was responsible for their deaths.

The Iowa serves the same kind of deadly ambition. At the memorial service, Bush said, "The Iowa was recommissioned, and her crew trained, to preserve the peace." Like his predecessor, Bush hopes no one asks just what he means by "peace." He can't just say these 47 men died training for an imperial conflict, for U.S. intervention in the third world. He cares not tell their families why young men have to die for their country in the military service he commands. But, like his predecessor, he bears some responsibility--for the policy which requires these weapons, allows these deaths, and defines "peace" as the peace of the grave, both for the peoples and nations who defy the U.S. empire, and for the men and women whom he enlists in the U.S. imperial service.



# Book Review: Robert Anson's War News

Pete Zastrow

WAW National Office



Robert Anson's WAR NEWS is a fine book, hanging out to dry some of the dirtiest laundry of the U.S. press corps in Vietnam 20 years ago. As a member of the opposition, however, I can say that Anson missed a few items.

Anson was the leftie correspondent for Time Magazine from 1969 on for well over a year. Much of his tour was spent in Cambodia where he was for some time the "senior" American correspondent until that sad country disappeared into the nightmare of Pol Pot. Arriving in Vietnam in July of 1969 Anson spent the early part of his tour in Vietnam, constantly fighting with the Time Saigon staff who were cheerleading for the U.S. presence in Vietnam. Worse, none of Anson's stories got printed in the magazine where the editorial board was just as rah-rah about U.S. government policy in Vietnam (a surprise to no one who remembers Time's flag-waving articles for years of the Vietnam War).

Unable to reach a truce with others (including, importantly, the Time bureau chief in Saigon) Anson was exiled to Laos and Cambodia, shortly afterwards choosing Cambodia as his area of operations. From Cambodia, his articles got printed to the point where his photo appeared in Time's "Newsmakers" section, something unheard of according to Anson. His articles were accurate enough so that he was declared persona non grata for three days while Time put pressure on the U.S. government which put pressure on the Cambodians and Anson was invited back.

It's clear from the book that correspondents in Cambodia suffered from one of the most potent enemies of the U.S. troops in Vietnam--boredom. Boredom plays no role in the dozens of Vietnam movies or TV reprises; boredom is only touched on in some of the scores of novels about Vietnam. This is not surprising: boredom hardly sells. Any troop who was in Vietnam, however, can tell about days or weeks of dreary flat boredom; it might have been broken by moments of intense excitement or terror or something else (something well remembered) but mostly not much of anything happened.

For correspondents in Cambodia boredom was not only boring but was an attack on their livelihood, since no action meant no stories. The search for action left a few correspondents dead or disappeared and presumed dead. Anson counts the missing--the total is 18 who disappeared and were never found in the first 6 months of the Cambodian War, somewhat less than the number of U.S. or Vietnamese military personnel killed. Anson himself came close, often blurring the imaginary line between reporting and participating. He led a Cambodian army into a town near Angkor Wat because the Cambodian leader asked him to (the troops would follow an American was the logic; the episode says much about the Cam-

bodian military and about the depth of U.S. involvement). He spent a night protecting ethnic Vietnamese from being butchered by Cambodian troops (as a Vietnamese invasion grew more and more likely Cambodians reacted with ferocious attacks on the Vietnamese). Finally, he was captured by the Vietnamese, shuttled from place to place, threatened with death--a threat he fully believed--interrogated, imprisoned, and finally released when the Vietnamese discovered he had saved Vietnamese from an earlier prospective massacre.

For a book about reporting on the war, there is plenty of action. As a zinger, Anson describes returning to Vietnam 20 years later and meeting the Vietnamese who was, as a member of the Time bureau in Saigon, the source of much inside information during the war. When he returned, Anson met him in the uniform of a colonel of the [North] Vietnamese military; he had been a high-ranking intelligence officer for the North Vietnamese during the whole time he had worked for Time.

Anson does not take on the obvious question about the war being lost because the media stabbed the U.S. effort in the back. But, he doesn't have to. Whether it means to or not, the book constantly demonstrates the incestuous relationship between the press and the U.S. government and its various Southeast Asian flunky governments: as the anti-war movement suspected all along, there was little difference between the government line and what the press wanted to report. Anson was shocked when the U.S. government chief military press officer appeared at Anson's first Saigon party with his arm around the rest of the Time staff. Anson seemed to know then about mouthpieces for the government line.

There was more than just parroting the official line, however. Anson tells of the senior U.S. military attache at the U.S. embassy in Phnom Penh who was booted out at the insistence of Arnaud de Borchgrave, then a Newsweek correspondent, who felt the U.S. was not prosecuting the war with sufficient vigor. Arnaud de Borchgrave has since gone on to be the Moonie man on the scene as editor of the Washington Star, organ of the Unification Church.

Anson reports several news conferences where U.S. government spokesmen were asked tough questions. That was not usual. The congenial we're-all-in-this-together relationship between the press and the military/U.S. government propaganda machine precluded any serious disruptions. If a reporter, for instance, wanted to cover a military operation in Vietnam, he had to have the U.S. military fly him to the point of action; was he then going file a story seriously critical of the same people he would depend on for his next story?

At the same time Anson was arriving in Vietnam, I was the information officer for the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Air Cavalry Division. Sometime around July of 1969, the Brigade was stationed in Song Be, a dusty (or muddy) speck of land next to one of the two mountains in lower South Vietnam. Having controlled the dropping of many 500-pound bombs on the jungles through which the NLF was moving supplies, the 1st Air Cav was proud to have provided a large number of hoi chanhs--Vietnamese civilians who were supposed to have been Viet Cong sympathizers and were now putting themselves under the protection of the U.S. military. Not surprisingly--children were bleeding from the ears as a result of their nearness to the explosions of the huge bombs. These were people who lived well back in the jungles, on the edge of civilization (our maps had the area uninhabited).

Then the bombs rained; U.S. troops followed. Villagers allowed themselves, in terror, to be herded onto helicopters--a U.S. propaganda triumph. The press was alerted in Saigon, only fifty or so miles away, an easy helicopter trip. They arrived at the 1st Air Cavalry base camp at the foot of Nui Ba Rha where we provided jeeps for the 2 or 3 mile trip into Song Be city where the refugees were being housed. The trickle of refugees on the first couple of days turned into torrents until hundreds of men, women and children were housed in Song Be refugee centers. Fine pictures, a good story showing the U.S. military had a heart--and the right story for a time when the U.S. was winning hearts and minds in the process of turning the war over to the South Vietnamese military.

Unfortunately, just as the refugee flood reached its peak, and the press heavies were visiting--The New York Times, Time Magazine: the media that Information Officers always hoped would appear when we were looking good--a couple of local kids (as we learned later) were playing with matches near the base fuel dump. JP-4--helicopter fuel--was stored in 500-gallon blivets which were nothing more than large plastic bags. A leak in one of them, a little fuel running out of the fuel dump, kids with matches, and there was a roaring fire. The U.S. military had no way to douse the fire; clouds of black smoke soared skyward--for hours and then days.

Several of the distinguished correspondents remarked, as we lunched at the mess hall in Song Be, that they had seen the columns of smoke when they took off from Saigon. I had no clear idea how I was going to answer the anticipated questions. I should not have been concerned. There was not a question about smoke covering the area. The correspondents--the best of Saigon's press corps--were there to cover the refugee story and were not about to be distracted by another U.S. military blunder. They were covering their assigned story. Period.

What other U.S. stupidities do we know nothing about because our media watchdogs never bothered to ask? Are there hundreds or thousands of little and big secrets just waiting to be revealed?

We were, back in 1969, in the worst possible position to know how any story was being covered; of course we never saw stateside TV coverage, but beyond that we seldom saw magazines and only occasionally did we see Stars & Stripes, the official U.S. military organ.

Toward the end of War News Anson talks about spending time with Vietnam veterans during the time when Vietnam Veterans Against the War was throwing medals away on the steps of the Capitol Building. "They were regular guys," Anson says, "something I previously hadn't taken the time to find out." As an "information" officer I was making sure Anson & Co did not find out. While they were interviewing "regular guys," I was standing right there wearing my captain's bars (it was the only time I wore them while in Vietnam). I didn't have to say anything, just stand there and be present.

What Anson or another reporter might have learned from the "regular guys" who were fighting the war would never have been printed anyhow. Even a reporter as left as Anson could do little but put forward the government line because the situation required collusion. Anson's story is better when he is with and is released from the Vietnamese military; otherwise he, too, had to rely on the U.S. government. If we in the U.S. military hid information (which we did) the press did not work too hard to find it out. The marriage of convenience lasted until the end of the war when the Vietnamese brought about a sudden and rancorous divorce. The knife-in-the-back theory of why the U.S. lost in Vietnam is part of the divorce propaganda; it never happened and, as War News shows, the relationship could have hardly been closer.



# Death Squads, Corruption and U.S. Assistance Colombia

By Evan Douthit

Suddenly Colombia has made the hysteria-of-the-month issue in the U.S. media.

We all know by now what the hysteria-of-the-month is. It's when the U.S. media and politicians make a great deal of noise about some issue, usually far away, to either divert people's attention away from pressing issues in the U.S. or to spread confusion about a pressing issue. Sometimes the hysteria does both. Then after several weeks of ranting, a few laws are passed, some money is sent, and the issue is virtually dropped.

The targets of these hysterias are people who are removed from the center of power of the U.S. media, U.S. corporations and the U.S. government.

The hysteria around the rain forest destruction in Brazil was one recent example. The destruction of the rain forests are truly a horrifying development. But one would have never surmised from the coverage that it is West Europe, Japan and especially the U.S. that have wrecked, and continue to wreck, the most havoc on the world environment.

I do not have much sympathy for the Brazilian elite. They are greedy slime who have sold their country to the U.S. and West Europe and preside over a society where four out of five live below the poverty line, where three in five live below the extreme line and where one in three live under the absolute misery line.

Still, the ranting over the rain forest is suspicious, especially since the Brazilian side of the story was simply not transmitted during the "hate month." (This is another sign of a hysteria of the month campaign, the other side's defense does not have to be reported, leaving uncautious readers to assume that the victim, caught red handed in vileness, could only hold his head in shame before the moral titans of the U.S. press.)

What the Brazilians say, in their publications and presidential debates, is that West Europe and the U.S. are not distressed that the Amazon is being exploited to death. **It is that too much of the exploiting to death is being done by the Brazilians and not enough by the U.S. and West Europe!**

Furthermore, the Brazilians assert that while an accelerating ecological crisis threatens humanity's survival, the developed nations are simply shifting the blame for the conditions they have created onto the poor and backward nations. Meanwhile the "responsible" U.S., West Europe and Japan "solve" their toxic waste disposal problems by dumping them on

the 3rd World, poisoning the land and water in Latin America in order to postpone the day of reckoning in the developing world.

## Colombia's Turn

The Colombia hysteria follows the same pattern. First the U.S. is scapegoating third world peasants for our own drug crisis. After doing everything we could to create societies in Latin America where the dollar is king and "export or die" is the slogan, we blame Latin Americans for taking what is actually only a small percentage of the money made on the international drug trade. *Yes, it is not our fault that we're all doped up, it's these fiends from somewhere else who irresponsibly take our money!*

Obviously drugs, such as tobacco, alcohol, cocaine, synthetic and natural opiates, are a serious problem. They are a problem that people everywhere want solved. But, heaven forbid, that we would ever admit that in this best of all possible countries people would be so miserable, alienated and without hope that they would simply try to blot out reality. Heaven forbid that we would ever admit that our culture, which teaches instant gratification, that trains people to seek instant cure for their problems in something that could be bought over a counter, and then locks them into an anti-human environment (the suburbs) or worse (the West Side of Chicago), could be in any way responsible.

That would be too obvious. That is something the power elite could be held to account for, at least in theory. Far better that we should talk about the Colombians.

But diversion is only part of what is going on here. There is the whole question of shutting down civil liberties in the war on drugs. All evidence and experience says that shutting down civil liberties will not stop the drug business, it will stop civil liberties. Besides, if they're really so upset about drug addiction, why does it take six months to get into a treatment program?

Not that drug victims in the U.S. are being totally ignored. They too can be scapegoated, the way one recent NY TIMES article blamed them for the collapse of the public health system. No mention was made in that article, of course, to the mammoth budget cuts being made in health care. Cuts made to pay off the debt run up by President "Feel Good" Ronnie and his out of control plastic.

But back to Colombia, drugs and foreign policy. We can thank Ronnie for one thing.

He brought U.S. foreign policy into such disrepute world wide, and even here, that a whole new excuse for interfering in other countries had to be manufactured.

So the new president, what's his name, has an excuse to intervene elsewhere, while pretending for U.S. public opinion that he is doing something about the substance abuse problem.

But that is only half the story.

99% of the problem with the mainstream media in the U.S. is not what they report (even though at least 50% of what they do report are gross errors or deliberate lies), but what they do not report.

Very few Americans, for example, are aware that four years ago a new, progressive political party was formed in Colombia, the Patriotic Union. In its four years of existence more than 800 of its members have been murdered by death squads. These eight hundred included more than four Colombian congressmen, including the party leader Senator Jaime Pardo Leal, the former head of the Judges Trade Union. These included Jose Antequera, the number two leader of the UP, a 34 year old congressman, who was gunned down by hit men at the Bogota International Airport this spring. The murdered have also included mayors, city councillors, trade union and community activists.

Three years ago the United Workers Central was formed, a trade union confederation with 800,000 members, the largest in Colombia. Since then more than 320 trade unionists have been murdered, 80% of them elected union officials. More than 60 teachers. More than 30 judges. More than 40 banana workers in the Uraba area.

The main war in Colombia is not the war between the government and the Medellin Cartel. The main war is the "dirty war" against the opposition, if you can call it a war when death squads and paid assassins murder hundreds and thousands of unarmed and defenseless government opponents.

The Medellin Cartel has been linked closely to this war, so has, often, the military. Both the Medellin Cartel and the military sponsor and support the paramilitary groups operating in Colombia. There are more than 150 of these paramilitary groups, as the Administrative Department of Security (the secret police) has reported. And they have often been trained by Israeli and British mercenaries.

(Interestingly enough, the Administrative Department of Security has asked Interpol to

## Homeless Vets on Hunger Strike!

Vietnam vets once again found themselves in battle, this time at the nation's first and only homeless shelter for veterans.

Ben Colon and Earl Bettoe have been on a hunger strike since December 10 to protest the intolerable conditions at the Borden Avenue shelter in Long Island City, New York, where they stay. They are backed up by a 10-person leadership group and many of the 400 vets who live in the Salvation Army-run shelter.

They are protesting the "arrogant, dictatorial, unresponsive and inhumane treatment of the homeless veteran population. This important situation must be brought to the public's attention immediately to employ the tools of democracy--the very ideals we served to defend and protect--" The veterans have presented a list of nine demands (including employment, medical care and permanent housing) to the shelter administrators.

**People's Tribune**

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**LATIN AMERICA NEWS UPDATE**  
Evan Douthit, Editor & Publisher





## Continued from last page Colombia



*U.S. Army unloads drug warrior helicopters in Bogota.*

seek the arrest of one of these mercenaries, Israeli Colonel Yahir Klein. Israeli ambassador to Bogota, Tadmor was quoted as saying that Israel does not "extradite its citizens" and that "Klein is a good soldier. He did not know whom he was working for.")

Meanwhile, not only are the paramilitaries well trained, they are well armed. Earlier this year the minister of Defense claimed that the government had intercepted a shipment of \$10 million in weapons for the Colombian guerrillas. Recently the Colombian congress accused him of perjury, for telling congress this when he knew that the guns were bought by the drug lords for their paramilitary groups.

It should be noted that these paramilitaries are not engaged against the guerrillas, of whom there are many in Colombia. When a paramilitary squad out murdering and threatening unarmed people does run into guerrillas the paramilitaries get cut down. But this does not happen very often. They are good at avoiding opponents who have guns.

And while the drug lord and army hitmen are armed to the teeth, only a handful of the judges whose lives have been threatened get bodyguards and armored cars (and that does not seem to do much good either). The judges have been reduced to begging the government to sell them guns with which they can defend themselves. (Actually they asked the government to take it out of their wages in installments, a good idea since the judges have often had to strike to get paid.)

On numerous occasions witnesses and survivors have identified military officers as having taken part in massacres and death squad attacks, but they are almost never punished. The killers are operating under almost total immunity.

But on top of slaughter of unarmed civilians, there is a drug war of sorts, the war between the Cali and Medellin Cartels for control of the New York market.

To understand this we have to go back to the beginning. The original drug boom in Colombia occurred in the 70's, with the boom in Colombian marijuana. The Colombian marijuana industry fell into crisis in the late 70's when the Florida marijuana crop took over the lucrative New York and Miami markets.

At just this desperate point, the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan, causing enormous disruption in the world opium market, as Afghanistan was one of the great world producers.

Suddenly, the Colombian drug industry, with most of the infrastructure in place for export,

and with a sudden need in the U.S. market for a new hard drug to take the place of the missing opiates, turned to massive cocaine trafficking.

And they had some interesting help. This summer the Costa Rican legislature released a report on the drug trafficking in Costa Rica, which revealed that the Medellin Cartel used the Oliver North Contra supply network to ship at least two and a half tons of cocaine to the United States. (As a result of this report Oliver North and former National Security Advisor John Poindexter, former U.S. ambassador Tambs, and former CIA chief in Costa Rica Fernandez have been barred from Costa Rica.)

As this new industry boomed, several major cartels were formed, the most important being the Cali and Medellin Cartels. In almost all of the U.S. reporting on the issue, only the Medellin Cartel is mentioned. There are significant differences between the two cartels. Perhaps the most important, is that the Cali cartel is much more sophisticated and "mainstream." They were much more successful at integrating themselves into the previous business elite and oligarchy in Colombia, while the Medellin Cartel was cruder and ruder.

Two years ago the two cartels went to war over the New York market, and scores have been killed in this battle. Naturally competition for sales heated up, and prices, and profits fell.

Some people might find it interesting that just as prices and profits were falling drastically, the Colombian government began its offensive against the Medellin Cartel, while conspicuously ignoring the existence of the Cali Cartel.

The attack on the Medellin Cartel was unleashed by the murder of Luis Carlos Galan, a Liberal Party candidate for the President who was leading in the polls. But there are good reasons to doubt that the Medellin Cartel killed Galan, crude and vicious as they are.

And for all the noise, the attack on the Medellin Cartel has been extremely ineffective. None of the top leaders of the Cartel have been arrested. The reason given by the Defense and Interior ministers: The Medellin Cartel has informants within the army and police who give warning of the upcoming raids. (A document captured earlier in the year gave evidence that the Cali Cartel even had informants on the Colombian National Security Council!)

It is highly unlikely that the present farse, or if one prefers, war, will lead to anything more than a temporary cut in supply and rise in price, and profits.

Speaking of prices and profits, the U.S.

recently gave a lesson on how concerned it is that Colombians and Latin Americans in general have some alternative to growing coca bushes. Thanks largely to U.S. efforts, the world coffee agreement was sabotaged. Speaking at Madison, Wisconsin on October 6, Dr. Alfredo Vasquez Carrizosa, the former foreign minister of Colombia and the present chairman of the Colombian Permanent Committee for Human Rights, noted that the destruction of the world coffee agreement would cost his country at least \$400 million a year and force the next president of Colombia to declare a moratorium on payments of the country's foreign debt.

Then, there is the guerrilla war in Colombia. The present guerrilla war in Colombia can be traced back as far as 1948, when the popular leader Eleazar Gaitan was murdered in Bogota, leading to a mammoth revolt, the famous "Bogotazo," which almost no one in the U.S. has ever heard of because it is seldom mentioned in U.S. press articles about Colombia. What followed was a civil war between the Liberal and Conservative parties in which anywhere from 200,000 to 500,000 people died in what was known as "la Violencia." This is also something that almost no one in the U.S. has ever heard of, again for the same reason.

The oldest of the present guerrilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), began operations in the 60's. Other groups, such as the ELN, the EPL and the M-19 also began operating. At the time of the inauguration of President Virgilio Barco in 1986, top leaders of his own Liberal Party claimed that the guerrillas controlled 50% of the area of Colombia.

A peace process was begun under previous president Belisario Betancur, a process that has wavered between semi-progress and total war ever since. At present the M-19, which leads less than 10% of the guerrillas, is holding talks with the government on disbanding, while the rest of the groups, who make up the Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordination, are in a state of semi-truce and semi-talks. But they are growing impatient, both with the failure of the government to move forward on talks, and the continued murder of progressive political, trade union, and community activists.

The military aid and military advisors that President Bush is sending to it is the war against the guerrillas, and the war against the unarmed civilian opposition. The aid is for conventional military war, not for a war against a mafia.

What can be done about this horror before Colombia, a country of 30 million people with almost twice the land area of France, becomes another El Salvador, only two orders of magnitude greater?

1. Write to President Virgilio Barco, demanding that he dissolve the paramilitary groups, that he purge from the armed forces the officers who have taken part in the murders and massacres, and that they be brought to trial and punished. He can be reached by writing:

President Virgilio Barco, Palacio de Narino, Calle 10, Carreras 5-6, Bogota D.E., Colombia

2. You can also write to the Colombian Ambassador to the UN, Ambassador Enrique Penalosa, 140 E. 57th St., NY, NY 10022, and to the Colombian ambassador to the U.S., Victor Mosquera Chaux, 2118 Leroy Place, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008

3. Write to your congressmen and Senators to tell them that Colombians do not need U.S. guns and advisors and we do not want another Vietnam War in Latin America. Demand that the U.S. congress hold hearings on the systematic and unpunished massacres and murders of civilians in Colombia.

4. Go to Colombia to see for yourself, and show Colombians that Americans are concerned. These four steps can save lives.

5. For more information on Colombia and what you can do, contact:

The Colombian Human Rights Committee, PO Box 3130, Washington, D.C. 20010, (202)



# Vietnam Veterans Tell Their Story RECOLLECTIONS

## Philippines Little Pink Pages and One Big Lie

by Dave Curry  
VVAW National Office Staff

Earlier this year, Colonel James Rowe was terminated with prejudice by unidentified assassins in an exclusive suburb of Manila in the Republic of the Philippines. Commander of Joint United States Military Advisory Group, Colonel Rowe, a former Vietnam POW, is the kind of soldier that most of us would have expected to have been honored extraordinarily in death. However, his body arrived in the U.S. without fanfare. There was no overt attention from the President, no special recognition for this man who was one of the highest ranking logistics officers in the Philippines.

I think I know the reason. Colonel Rowe wasn't exactly a logistics officer. He was something more--something much more. In fact, Colonel Rowe was once a teacher of mine, but it wasn't in logistics school.

Rowe's lessons were person, though they weren't personally presented. They were lessons that as memories would join me and my fears during the first part of my tour in Vietnam. More important than lessons about weapons and strategy, Major Rowe's lessons were about people--people as instruments and objects of war both declared and undeclared. My experience of James Rowe, the teacher, occurred at Fort Holabird in Dundalk, just outside Baltimore, Maryland, in 1970.

When I was a student there, demonstrators picketed the gates of Ft Holabird protesting scab lettuce in the mess halls. Just inside the gates, beyond the demonstrators with their anti-lettuce signs, were rooms filled with tens of thousands of files on American dissidents. Large rooms. Well before the current age of computerization, there were computerized file systems on "key" radicals. Twenty-four hours a day, second lieutenants watched all three major TV networks ready to preserve on videotape anything that might be of interest to or in violation of national security. (Actually, I've always thought that despite the dangers of soap opera addiction theirs was an enviable job.) Ft Holabird was the nerve center of Army Intelligence. Army intelligence made national news in the early seventies for outstripping all of its competition--the FBI, CIA, Secret Service, and other military service intelligence agencies--in efforts at domestic surveillance.

I was in the "research" officers course. Its name had just been changed from "counter-intelligence" course. In fact, many of the materials were still marked "counterintelligence." The MOS had stayed the same--9666 or simply

"triple six" in the trade--though it's changed now. For five months, each day we took classes on all the tricks of our trade. (Actually, five weeks were sacrificed to map reading and typing.) There was an \$18.10 per day TDY (temporary duty) pay to help us deal with any tedium. We had classes on surveillance and subject interviews (still called interrogations by some). There were even near comical exercises in which we followed people around downtown Baltimore. Actors portrayed ordinary Americans from whom we attempted to extract information about their friends and relatives while our classmates watched from the other side of a one-way mirror. We took notes during our classes in little red notebooks with lined pink pages officially marked "SECRET" at the bottom of each page on both sides. Our notebooks were kept locked in a file safe in the front of our home classroom. During preparation for tests, the class security officer (one of the captains, more senior than the assortment of second and first lieutenants who made up the general throng) would be responsible for signing out each student's notebook for supervised study.

Amidst the more boring stuff on how to write reports to ruin people's careers, Major Rowe's class was unquestionably a treat for young male hormones longing for adventure. For one thing, it was really "SECRET." While many of our classes were "CONFIDENTIAL," most were only "NOFORN"--that is, not for foreign nationals. Major Rowe's class was taught by video (in those days an innovation in itself). It was not only SECRET, it had real surprises that we hadn't already heard in the news. These facts we would NEVER hear in the news. The most shocking of the not-for-prime-time facts was that Major Rowe was ONE OF US! James Rowe, a military intelligence officer, had been captured and held by the National Liberation Front in Vietnam, and he'd never been discovered. What he wanted us to know was that we could do it too, if only we could learn the lessons that he could teach us about dealing with hostile representatives of the third world.

As far as we in his eager audience could tell, James Rowe had mastered the third world--body and mind. His personal story is the embodiment of that mastery. From the very beginning, his relationship with his Vietnamese captors was a successful falsehood. The Vietnamese had believed Rowe's collar insignia and identification that said that he was a member of the Corps of Engineers. In Rowe's account, his Vietnamese captors had believed his story of his imaginary career as an

engineer. Every minute of his dealings with the Vietnamese had been a lie or the manipulation of a lie to project a new lie. Major Rowe was lecturing a new class of neophyte Military Intelligence guys just like he had been. He wanted to let us know that we, too, could deceive people of the third world even if we were under the gun, under their control, as he had been. One of his key strategies was to construct our lies in layers. The more elaborate and detailed the initial lie, the longer its durability. The more powerful the lie that lay behind that first lie, the greater the chance for success, because it could always be presented with the air of confession in the context of a truth confided after days, months, or years of personal contact. Major Rowe's ability to develop his lies had made it possible for him to survive and wait until he could overcome his captors. This was the substance of the details of Rowe's presentation.

In the years following my exposure to James Rowe's lesson, I went on to serve as a counter-intelligence officer in Vietnam in my own right. I followed Rowe's teaching until I grew sick of serving the interest of corporations in supposedly duping the people of the so-called developing nations. I wore civilian clothes. In my pocket, I often carried identification that said I was a civilian government service worker in logistics. One of my units was called Military Manpower Detachment. I identified Vietnamese dissidents for assassination or incarceration without trial. I identified American citizens for further scrutiny and defamation. Finally, I just couldn't handle it and became a dissident myself.

Major Rowe became Lieutenant Colonel Rowe, then Colonel Rowe. He served as head of the counterinsurgency school at Ft Bragg. He trained many more MI guys just like me and just like himself. It is said that in his role in the Philippines, Colonel Rowe masterminded a low intensity war against the people of the Philippines. The death squads that have become such an aggravation to human rights advocates in the Philippines are said to have been his brain children. Finally, though, Colonel James Rowe died of bullet wounds inflicted on him despite the fact that he was riding in a specially purchased bullet-proof Toyota. For the people of the third world, the last lie has peeled away. But for most Americans, the layers of lies are still intact. Colonel Rowe reported back to his country in his coffin and was met with the silence usually reserved for one of us MI guys.

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