

Editor's Preface to the Second Edition

Since the first edition of *From Warriors to Resisters: U.S. Veterans on Terrorism*, the United States has “pre-emptively” attacked and occupied Iraq. Just as U.S. leaders have long sacrificed lives throughout Latin America in pursuit of power and profit, they now are doing so in Iraq—and also are putting many well-meaning but misinformed U.S. citizens at risk. The deaths of more than 1700 U.S. soldiers and 22,800 Iraqi civilians have been documented since “Shock and Awe” began in March 2003. (And medical researchers have estimated as many as 98,000 war-related fatalities among Iraqi civilians for the first 18 months of the war, as published in the *Lancet*.)

There is no end in sight to this U.S.-led occupation, and “occupiers” are in great demand. According to a *New York Times* article by Damien Cave, the Army is seeking 101,200 new active-duty Army and Reserve soldiers for 2005. Tens of thousands of military personnel already enlisted are finding their commitments extended with “stop-loss” orders—while others are bringing the war back home with blunt traumas to their bodies and minds. And even as recruiters aggressively and seductively target high school students, murmurings of a draft grow louder by the day. (The good news: antiwar veterans are challenging recruiters’ pitches in many of those schools, and the Iraq War is becoming a more difficult sell. According to Cave, at least 37 Army recruiters have gone AWOL during the current conflict, while others have asked for other assignments and one for conscientious objector status.)

Dangerous times require good information and strong community. This second edition adds five narratives by warriors-turned-resisters from Gulf War II (see *Veterans Resisting the Iraq War*, p. 58). I’ve also included a list of organizations and resources for people considering—or perhaps reconsidering—a military commitment. Surely individuals pondering such momentous decisions deserve more than recruitment hype and oversimplified appeals to duty. And all U.S. citizens deserve accurate information about the real motives driving this war and occupation, and about citizens’ and servicemembers’ responsibilities under the law. (See p. 76 for list of organizations.)

Sooner or later, truth does carry the day. By now the Bush Administration has been caught in lies it told to justify invading Iraq, thanks largely to dissenters within the government and the intelligence community. These insiders denied that Iraq had any weapons-of-mass-destruction (WMD) capability, and they disputed any connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam

Hussein. It's quite clear now: the Bush Administration rejected good intelligence in order to fabricate a case for invasion.

Despite the best intentions of many individuals in the military, U.S. forces have repeatedly fired upon and bombed civilians. Unexploded cluster bomblets attract Iraqi children—who hope the bright yellow canisters might be toys—often maiming or killing them. Shell casings with depleted uranium (DU)—considered WMD by the UN for its pervasive and long-lasting toxicity—have been used extensively during both Gulf Wars; radioactive waste from DU threatens all in the area (including military personnel) and future generations. And, finally, some military personnel have used physical and psychological torture against Iraqi detainees, most infamously in Abu Ghraib prison; low-ranking troops have been court-martialed.

Yet, in the highest ranks, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and newly appointed Attorney-General Alberto Gonzales continue to dodge international law—by denying “prisoner of war” status to captured insurgents, for instance. And Gonzales, while still White House counsel in January 2002, recommended to G.W. Bush that “The nature of the new war [on terror] ... renders obsolete [the Geneva Convention’s] strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners....” Apparently Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez got the message. In a September 2003 memo, Sanchez—then the highest-ranking U.S. general in Iraq—authorized abusive interrogation techniques for use in Iraq. According to American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawyer Amrit Singh, the permitted techniques “violate the Geneva Conventions and the army’s own field manual governing interrogations.”

Numerous legal and human rights groups are resisting Bush Administration attempts to place itself above the law. One example: in October 2003, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the ACLU—in association with the Physicians for Human Rights, Veterans for Common Sense, and Veterans for Peace—filed a Freedom of Information Act request regarding the treatment of detainees held by the United States overseas. On the basis of documents released, the ACLU claims that “abuse of detainees was not aberrational but systemic,” and the CCR maintains that “the Bush Administration has systematically encouraged torture techniques prohibited under the Geneva Conventions and the Covenant against Torture.” Both groups have called for the appointment of a Special Prosecutor to inquire into the abuse and torture of detainees, including those “rendered” to countries where they can be interrogated under torture.

Resistance is growing within military ranks, too. The Pentagon claimed in December 2004 that 5500 military personnel had deserted since the beginning of the war, many refusing to report for a second tour of duty. And, increasingly, military families are resisting losing their loved ones to an agenda more economic than defensive. To them, “supporting the troops” does not mean supporting the war. To them, Bush Administration talk of “spreading freedom and democracy” rings false and hypocritical—and the families’ patriotism now challenges that hypocrisy.

Questioning government war policy—especially when that policy receives a largely uncritical treatment by the mainstream media, and especially when one is already in uniform—can be a very frightening and lonely process. But a strong community of resistance does exist, deeply rooted in international, U.S. Constitutional, and moral law. Truly, no one needs to face these difficult questions alone.

Margaret Knapke, July 2005

See www.iraqbodycount.net and <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/iraq/casualties/facesofthefallen.htm> for the latest confirmed fatality figures.