



The Center on
Conscience & War

The Reporter for Conscience' Sake

Volume 61

Winter 2004

Number 4

A New Crop of Vets Hits the Streets

by Jessica LeCompte

Since late 2001, hundreds of thousands of U.S. military personnel have traveled overseas to serve in Operation Enduring Freedom (in Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Over the past months, many of those personnel have begun to rotate home, relieving and delighting their loved ones. To homeless service providers, however, their homecoming means more than soldiers returning stateside -- it signals the start of a new wave of homeless veterans.

Rising housing costs and gaps between the time military benefits end and veterans benefits begin can make returning home a struggle, according to homeless advocates. Additionally, soldiers must adapt to civilian life, search for jobs and housing and struggle with the emotional trauma that may result from time spent in a war zone.

According to a recent survey by the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans (NCHV) in Washington, D.C., homeless veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are already beginning to trickle into the nation's homeless system. In the D.C. area, two homeless veterans of the recent conflicts have already sought help from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA).

veterans closely paralleling the dramatic post-Vietnam increase. A sobering thought, given that 35 years after the conclusion of the Vietnam War, nearly 150,000 of its veterans are homeless on any given night, according to the NCHV.

Pete Dougherty, director of homeless programs at the VA, believes that the VA is prepared to meet the needs of recent veterans and does not expect a homelessness crisis of the magnitude seen following Vietnam.

Last spring, the VA changed its intake form specifically to track veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. As of January 2005, of the 13,000 new veterans seen by the VA since last spring (when the government first started asking veterans on intake forms about specific war service), 126 had served in the current conflicts in Iraq or Afghanistan. Of those 126, less than three dozen needed VA healthcare treatment for substance abuse or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or help finding housing, said Dougherty.

“The initial snapshot of these new veterans shows us several interesting things, the first being that many are not what you and I would call ‘literally homeless.’ That is, they have a place to stay right now, but they are either significantly underemployed or unemployed,” Dougherty said. “What they are telling us is that they are at risk of not being able to pay their rent.”

Still, the VA recognizes a need for more homelessness services for veterans. Currently, the VA partners with 300 non-profit and faith-based transitional centers across the country. One thousand beds were recently added to

(continued on p. 7)

Also Inside:

News Briefs.....	2
Center News.....	3
International CO Day.....	4
Lobby Day.....	5
I Will Not Kill.....	6

The numbers may seem small now, but many homeless service providers, outreach workers and veterans personnel are bracing themselves for what they fear may be a new surge of homeless



Board of Directors

Anita Cole
At-Large

Jim Feldman, Sec.
At-Large

Phil Jones
Church of the Brethren

Shannon McManimon
Pax Christi

David Miller
Mennonite Central Committee

Mary Miller, Treas.
Episcopal Church

Jonathan K. Ogle, Chair
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Ibrahim Abdil-Mu-id Ramey
Fellowship of Reconciliation

Irving Ruderman
Jewish Peace Fellowship

Jean Martensen
At-Large

Staff

J.E. McNeil
Executive Director

Bill Galvin
Counseling Coordinator

Elizabeth Sprague
Outreach Coordinator

Theo Sittler
MCC Volunteer

Tim Verni-Lau
BVS Volunteer

Marcus Kroll
Legal Intern

Christopher Richmond
Volunteer

The Reporter for Conscience's Sake is a publication of the Center on Conscience & War.

1830 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: 202-483-2220
Fax: 202-483-1246
Email: nisbco@nisbco.org
URL: <http://www.nisbco.org>

News Briefs

Greek C.O. imprisoned

The first Greek professional soldier known to refuse to participate in the recent war in Iraq on the basis of his conscientious objection has been sentenced to 5 months in prison for the second time on the same charge: desertion. Although Greece recognizes the right to conscientious objection in principle - albeit with a lot of limitations and problems in practice - this does not apply to professional soldiers, who cannot claim their right to conscientious objection. WRL encourages protest and support.

(Source: War Resister League)

Norwegian Peace Prize for Vanunu

Mordechai Vanunu has been awarded the Norwegian People's Peace Prize for 2005 for his courageous action to protect the people in Israel, the Middle East and the world against destruction in a nuclear holocaust.

(Source: War Resisters League)

Italy ends conscription

From correspondents in Rome 30 July 2004
Bringing Italy into line with most of the rest of Europe, the Italian parliament today approved plans to make the armed services all-volunteer from January 1, ending universal military conscription.

However, anyone wanting to join the police, the para-military carabinieri, the customs service or the fire service will still have first to serve a year in the army for a monthly salary.

(Source: News.Com.au)

Young Overseas Koreans Rush to Avoid Draft

Young overseas Koreans are rushing to give up their nationality ahead of a change in the law that would stop them from doing so without completing their military service. The National Assembly on May 4 passed a revision of the Nationality Law aimed at keeping Koreans with dual citizenship born while their parents were working abroad from avoiding conscription by giving up their Korean nationality.

(Source: Korea Times)

No 'pacifist' exemption for Bibi nephew

The Supreme Court upheld on Wednesday the army's decision to free the nephew of Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from the mandatory draft on grounds he was "unsuitable for service," ending his three-year court battle to be determined a conscientious objector.

Yonatan Ben-Artzi, 23, was called to be drafted in 2000 and refused multiple offers for dismissals, because he had wanted to be freed on grounds of "pacifism," which the army refused

The court rejected his appeal, saying an army-issued letter that was given to him and detailed the reasons for his exemption never explicitly ruled out any possibility that he may be a pacifist.

(Source: War Resisters League)

Total objector Daniel Koponen starts prison sentence

Finnish total objector Daniel Koponen, a 21-years old student from Espoo, started to serve his prison sentence on Thursday, 16 December 2004. He will spend 197 days behind bars. Koponen announced his refusal to the authorities in December 2003 and was sentenced to prison on September 21, 2004. (Source War resisters League)

Two Recent Grads Join the CCW Staff

Ian Yarett is thrilled to be a new summer volunteer here at the Center for Conscience & War. He is a 2005 graduate of Greenwich High School in Greenwich, CT and will be attending Swarthmore College in the fall. "It is so exciting to have this opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful organization that works so hard to defend the rights of both conscientious objectors and military personnel who are in need of advice. I sincerely hope that one day, peace within and among nations will be realized non-violently. War and killing is neither an answer nor an option. We should be working harder for world peace and understanding rather than following those who would lead us into war.

Jordan Aoyama is excited to be volunteering at the Center for Conscience & War this summer. He just graduated from Sandy Spring Friends School and will be attending the college of Juniata this fall. As an intern, he hopes to learn more about conscientious objection, the draft, and the military. Additionally, he expects to learn the basics on how a non-profit organization is run and get some work experience. "Most of all, I really want to help inform people about the decisions they make and how they might affect their lives. I hope to return next year to continue my internship."

ATTENTION

Former C.P.Sers

We are working on a future story on the C.P.S. camps!

If you have any stories, pictures or comments you would like to share

Please send them to:

1830 Connecticut Ave N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

or email - reporter@nisbco.org

Indiana Quaker Joins Staff for the Summer

Christopher Richmond, a junior at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, has joined the staff of the Center on Conscience & War through the end of July. He began his internship by jumping into the excitement of the May 15 Lobby weekend. "Lobbying is an important skill for any citizen to have, and I'm grateful to start my internship with this valuable experience," he noted. Building on his experience in writing two grants to pay for his travel and living expenses this summer, Chris will be assisting the Executive Director in seeking grant money for the essential projects that the Center on Conscience and War does. "We work for fundamental issues here," Chris said. "It comes down to the freedom to live out the deepest convictions of your conscience and that's really what I'm working for this summer." Chris can be reached by emailing chris@centeronconscience.org.

Nurse Joins CCW staff

Kim Abel joins us from Illinois, where she lives, and teaches nursing at a community college. "I came to D.C. to work at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for the months of June and July. My intention was to volunteer for peace groups when not working. I came to the Center on Conscience and War and got involved in revising a pamphlet on the Health Care Personnel Delivery System. I also hope to learn as much as I can from the great people at CCW and bring it back to Illinois, to implement with peace and justice groups there."

C.C.W. would not be able to function without your kind donations!!

All donations, big or small are welcome!!!!

Donate Online:

www.centeronconscience.org

International C.O. Day



J.E. McNeil, Executive Director of CCW (left) and Jonathon Ogle (right) opened the day with uplifting speeches.

John Judge of C.H.O.I.C.E.S. talks about the “nuts and bolts” of counter recruitment. John even excited the group with a fun “rap” at the end.

The Center on Conscience & War’s Fifth Annual Advisory Council Meeting on May 15th served to look back at the contributions and trials of conscientious objectors from the Second World War to today, and give hope for the future. The day featured several workshops and keynote speakers.

Following a brief meet and greet, the day opened with remarks by Jonathan Ogle and J.E. McNeil on the present and continuing efforts for CO rights, and the significance of International CO Day.

The first set of workshops invaded John Judge’s discussion of counter-recruitment in high schools, under the title “Let No Child be Left un-Recruited”, and tactics to keep the military out of our schools and our children’s lives. Bill Galvin discussed the military draft and the reality of it on the horizon.

The workshops were followed by a keynote address from speaker Sam Legg. He discussed his experience during the Second World War as a conscientious objector, ranging from acceptance from soldiers to difficulties from the civilian world.

The second set of workshops were held by Marian Franz, discussing the Peace Tax Fund, J.E. McNeil, highlighting GI Rights, and Theo Sittler, who gave tips on lobbying for CO rights. The lobbying workshop was particularly timely, as May 16th was lobby day on The Hill.

The Center Hosts Another Successful Lobby Day

Monday May 16, more than eighty people lobbied their local congressional offices around the country. And in Washington, DC, more than forty people lobbied their representatives and senators for the rights of conscientious objectors to participation in war.

At 9:00 AM, the staff of the Center on Conscience & War gathered across the street from the United States Capitol with concerned constituents to hear a reminder of why we were lobbying that day. Executive Director J.E. McNeil gave a brief overview of the bills for which CCW was lobbying, and Marian Franz, executive director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund briefed the group on their bill.

“A lot of these staffers don’t even know what a Conscientious Objector is, and so educating them is an important goal we have today,” J.E. McNeil said to the group. “We lobby with the Peace Tax Fund because conscientious objectors range on a continuum from those

Sam Legg speaks about his experience in a C.P.S. camp during WWII

Bill Galvin addressed the crowd as the second keynote speaker on the topic of conscientious objection



stories
Iraq
ing
was



CCW Lobbyist Theo Sither

who serve as non-combatants in the military to those who cannot in good conscience pay for war and killing.”

Speaking on the importance of lobbying for one’s conscience even if we’re not immediately successful, Marian Franz reminded the group, “You are the world’s greatest expert on your own beliefs, and that’s important

Bill Galvin--CCW Counseling Coordinator

for these staffers to hear.”

The chair of CCW’s board of directors, Jonathan Ogle, reflected, “the Lobby Day is crucial because congressional representatives need to hear from constituents directly around issues of conscientious objection. It also lets representatives know from constituents that we represent their concerns.”

After viewing a training video that covered the basics in lobbying (be specific, ask for the staffer to get back to you about your concerns, build your relationship with the congressional office, and say Thanks), the group was ready to speak to their elected representatives in support of their personal beliefs, that they could not participate in war, and that in this country, the rights of conscience should be protected.

“I Will Not Kill” Launched

On May 16th, 2005 the “I Will Not Kill” campaign was launched through a press conference on Capitol Hill in conjunction with International Conscientious Objector day and CCW’s National Lobby Day. The campaign was conceived at the Conscience and Courage gathering in Nyack, NY at the Fellowship of Reconciliation, where over thirty activists gathered to discuss the future of war resistance and the possible reinstatement of conscription.

The “I Will Not Kill” campaign is an effort to support the right of conscientious objection to war and to educate youth, especially youth of color and youth in rural and improvised areas, about alternatives to military service. The campaign will work to oppose any effort to reinstate the draft, dismantle the Selective Service System, raise awareness about resistance to war, and encourage conscientious objection as a viable option to war and violence.

Various organizations were represented at the press conference like the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Pax Christi, American Friends Service Committee, Clergy and Laity Concerned about Iraq, National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund and Rep. Cynthia McKinney’s (D-GA) office. Representatives from all these organizations offered statements at the press conference, including Anita Cole (board member), Ibrahim Ramey (board member) and Theo Sittler (staff) from CCW.

The campaign is currently in the planning and strategizing stage please refer to www.iwillnotkill.org for further updates.

Homeless Vets (continued)

those shelters, and another 1,000 are slated to follow. In many cities, D.C. included, the VA has increased its staff involved in outreach and partnering with service providers.

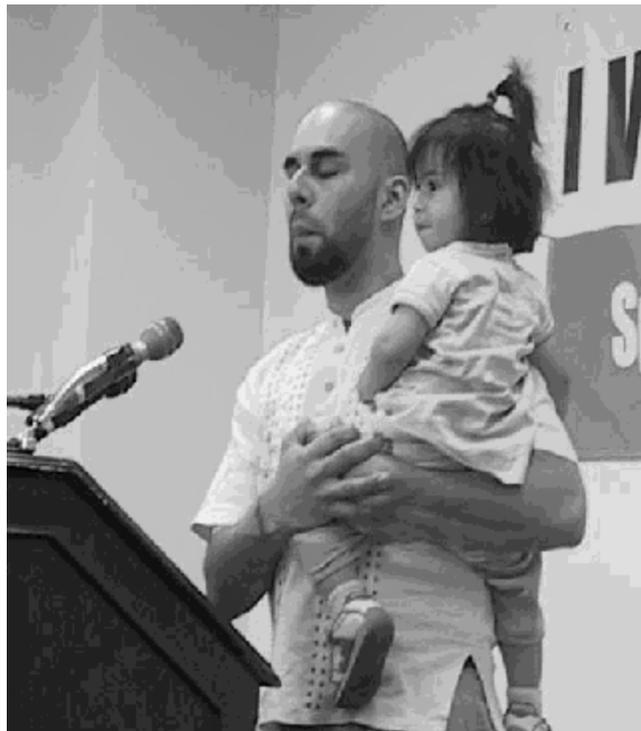
In addition to supporting traditional shelter services, the VA has begun to offer “stand downs” to target veterans who are unlikely to seek help from the shelter system. Designed to echo the familiar model of a military exercise, the stand downs are “three-day experiences that allow homeless vets to sleep in a bed, enjoy a hot meal, wash their clothes and have a shower,” said Dougherty. In 2003, the last time official statistics were gathered, the VA’s stand down programs served 22,000 homeless veterans.

The stand down programs and other VA efforts suggest that there are far more opportunities for new veterans to avoid homelessness than existed for Vietnam veterans, who had only roughly 170 clinics and veteran centers available to them nationwide. But despite the increases in centers and services, Linda Boone of the NCHV argues that it is not enough. Given that nearly 500,000 veterans are homeless at some point in any given year, said Boone, the VA is only serving 20 percent of them.

While the VA’s homeless program continues to do as much as it can to help the current population of homeless veterans, staff at the department also hope to prevent a new cycle from forming.

“Early intervention and prevention of homelessness is smarter economically, and is better for the health of both the individual and society,” said Dougherty.

(Reprinted with permission from Street Sense, Issue March 15, 2005. Street Sense is a local Washington, DC newspaper managed and distributed by people who are homeless)



Oskar Castro (AFSC) --and daughter--at the I Will Not Kill press conference



CCW Board Member Ibrahim Ramey (FOR) at the I Will Not Kill press conference



Center on Conscience & War
1830 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009-5706

Address service requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Washington, DC
Permit No. 6346

From the Desk of the Executive Director

“How do you get that lonely, how do you hurt that bad,
To make you make the call, that havin’ no life at all is
better than the life that you had
How do you feel so empty, you want to let it all go
How do you get that lonely... and nobody know”

How Do You Get that Lonely by Blaine Larsen

When I was driving back from a draft counselor’s training I first heard the words to this song. I didn’t hear the whole song the first time so I didn’t realize it was about teen suicide. All I could think about were the young men and women in the military.

In the military from 1980 through 1999, suicide represented 20% of the deaths. The Army responded to a 26% increase in active-duty suicides from 1997 to 1999 by implementing the suicide-prevention program in 2001. Yet a report in the Journal of Military Psychiatry in 2002 was entitled “How do you tell a suicide risk from a slacker?”

In Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the suicide rate is approximately 8.8% of “non-hostile” deaths. Even if you include all of the deaths in both campaigns the suicide rate is double the highest at risk group of males 18 to 24.

And this is probably only the beginning. Estimates of suicides of Vietnam Veterans subsequent to that war range from 20,000 to 200,000.

When you think of the victims of this wretched war, remember the young men and women who feel so empty that “havin’ no life at all, is better than the life that [they] had.” Remember the member of Iraqi Veteran’s Against the War who said before Congress “I have to live with what I did.” Think of the thousands who have no words to give their beliefs and so are convinced by the military powers that they are wrong in their belief that what they are doing is wrong.

Think of the veterans who will kill themselves in the next decade because we have not been able to reach them with the help they need.

And donate generously to the Center so we can reach more of them sooner and give them tools to end their participation in the war.

We are stopping war one soldier at a time.

Yours for Peace and Justice,

JE McNeil

