



The Center on
Conscience & War

The Reporter for Conscience' Sake

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War's Environmental Effects: "Camp American University"

By Michelle Williams and Theo Sittler

This is the first in a series of articles by Michelle and Theo on the environmental disasters caused by war.

War, often waged on the premise of preserving life and eradicating evil, has invariably had the opposite effect. Throughout the centuries to the present day, war has had numerous disastrous consequences, many of which are obvious. One such consequence, the environmental disaster caused by war, is often the least reported subject. For as long as wars have existed, the environment and natural habitats have been disrupted and destroyed. The environmental cost of war is frequently ignored.

The environment is the first and the last casualty of war. War effects the environment in such a way that the consequences are sometimes irreversible and it can leave a long

lasting effect. The environment is effected from the making of bombs and weapons to the first bomb dropped to years after an actual

war is over. World War I ushered in the age of chemical weapons, which has left its toxic sting on the world ever since. World War II was the time of fire bombings and the ushering in of the nuclear age. Consequently, during the Cold War the monstrous buildup of nuclear weapons by the United States and the Soviet Union has created toxic waste dumps around the world. In the Vietnam War, napalm was used and entire forests and rice patties were eradicated. Moreover, leftover landmines are still a danger in Vietnam and other countries; children and cattle are most often the victims of these landmines. In the 1991 Gulf War, the world witnessed the burning of oil fields, toxic chemicals being released into the air, and devastation caused to plant and marine life in the Persian Gulf. Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq are ongoing, and the environmental devastation can only be fully assessed when these conflicts are over.

Once the U.S. military stops its destructive actions in Iraq and Afghanistan and begins its reconstructive actions, environmental programs will be put into place. Much of this expenditure would not have been necessary had the military always taken precautions to protect the environment and the people living in it to begin with. Moreover, in many cases of environmental damage, the military has yet to take responsibility.

The particular case that will be illustrated in this and the next newsletter concerns

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News Briefs

Guardsmen is Sentenced

On Friday, May 21, 2004, US Army National Guard staff sergeant Camilo Mejia was sentenced to one year in prison, reduction in rank to E-1, forfeiture of 2/3 pay for one year, and a bad conduct discharge by a special court martial at Fort Steward. Camilo Mejia had been charged with desertion, although he applied for conscientious objector status.

After returning from duty in Iraq for rest and recreation, Camilo Mejia went into hiding to prepare his conscientious objection application.

Finnish objector is Sentenced

On March 8, Finnish objector Aleksi Uski, started to serve 192 days in prison for refusing to serve military or substitute service. Aleksi Uski's refusal is based on his anarchist-pacifist world view. He considers the conscription system foolish and therefore does not accept any substitute civilian service as part of it. Although Finland has a law on conscientious objection, this law requires any conscientious objector to perform a substitute service which is more than twice as long as military service, and therefore has to be considered as punitive.

Women CO is Sentenced in Israel

An Israeli CO was sentenced to serve time in an Israeli military prison. Inbal Gelbert began her fourth term of 14 days on February 29, 2004. Inbal Gelbert already spent time in prison in November 2003, after her request to be exempted for reasons of conscience

was turned down by the Conscience Committee. Inbal Gelbert, a pacifist, was then ordered to enlist, and refused. She was also rejected by the Incompatibility Committee. She was expected to be released on March 12, 2004.

Jonathan Ben-Artzi to be sentenced

Israeli conscientious objector Jonathan Ben-Artzi has finally been discharged from the military. Jonathan Ben-Artzi was first called up on 8 August 2002, and began a tour through military prisons on that day. He got seven prison sentences for refusing to enlist, and then a long court-martial began, which led to the military court finding Jonathan Ben-Artzi guilty, but also recommending to the Israeli Army to accept Jonathan Ben-Artzi as a pacifist and postponing sentencing for a future date.

Germany has CO Festival

A demonstration took place in the Northern German city of Münster on May 15, at which Turkish-Kurdish conscientious objectors who fled from Turkey and applied for asylum in Germany publicly declared their conscientious objection.

Korean Supreme Court to Hand Down Verdict on Military Objectors

A district court convicted a Jehovah's Witness on charges of dodging military duties as the Supreme Court moves to address public concerns over conflicting rulings by lower courts on the refusal of compulsory military duties based on religious grounds.

Carol Longenecker joins summer staff

My name is Carol Longenecker and I am excited to spend the Summer as an intern at Center on Conscience and War. Originally from Harrisonburg, VA, I recently graduated from Juniata College (Huntingdon, PA) with a degree in History and Secondary Education. I look forward to spending the next three months working at CCW as a Draft Counselor, and assisting the staff in a variety of ways.

Kara Fitzgerald joins summer staff

Hi, my name is Kara Fitzgerald and I am from Teaneck, New Jersey. I am studying geology at Earlham College in Indiana. I found out about CCW through a peace training that I participated in during the winter. I will be interning with the Center for the summer to help out and learn about anti-military activism. So far I have been trained for military and draft counseling by J.E. and Bill. I have also been compiling research and updating some informational packets. During my term here this summer I hope I help spread information and aid people in establishing CO files in preparation of a future draft. I am very excited for this opportunity. At the Center, I will be trained as a GI Rights/Draft counselor. I will be responsible for the Center's order book, and currently I am rewriting the Basic information packet that we send out. I will be in Washington through the summer.

CPS'er remembered

The Center would like to thank the family of Elbert Brubaker of Camden, OH. In lieu of flowers, the family had gifts sent in his honor and memory. We received over a thousand dollars in his memory, from people all around the country. Elbert was in CPS from 3-10-42 until 1-23-46. He served in Virginia and Oregon.

Remember CCW in your will.

Sara Baldwin joins summer staff

My name is Sara Baldwin. I am from Baltimore, Maryland and I am currently in my Junior Year at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia. I am studying Philosophy, Psychology and Japanese, and I hope to go to Law School to study International Law. My beliefs are not based upon any religious teaching, but upon my own ethics and morals that I have had since childhood. Being a philosophy major has also influenced my feelings towards war and everything that comes with it.

The ability to refrain from war and the military is something that, although not considered a right given by the constitution, should be honored as any other protected right. This country prides itself on our freedoms, the ability to choose for ourselves what we do with our lives, but there is nothing about forcing people to participate in something they disagree with that rings of freedom. Selective Service states that 50% of its mission is to protect Conscientious Objectors, and yet their registration forms still do not have a place to mark that the registrant is a CO. In addition, it is very difficult and takes a long time before the military or selective service will even acknowledge that a person is a CO. This, in my mind, does not seem to show that Selective Service is devoting 50% of its resources to protecting CO's.

By working at CCW I hope to be able to help those who are trying to claim status as a CO. In addition, I hope to learn more about CO's and the way the military and government treat them. With CCW also being a part of the GI Rights Hotline, I am also able to help people get out of the military in the best and quickest way possible. I support our troops even though I do not support war.

Fiona Korwin -Pawlowski joins summer staff

Hello, my name is Fiona Korwin-Pawlowski, and I'm from West Chester, Pennsylvania. I have returned to the Center for my second summer. I'm a GI Rights/Draft counselor and I'm working on putting together counter-recruitment materials. I attend Oberlin College and am majoring in Political Science.

International Conscientious Objector Day

International Conscientious Objectors' Day is celebrated on May 15 since the early 1980's. It is a day to highlight the struggle of conscientious objectors for the right to conscientious objection and against war and militarism.

May 14th, 2004 – Lobbying for Conscience's Sake

by Theo Sittler

The Center on Conscience & War, in conjunction with the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund and a number of other sponsoring organizations, held its annual National Lobby Day on May 14th, 2004. Over fifty conscientious people gathered in Washington and over fifty others around the country lobbied locally in over twenty states.

The lobby event was geared towards educating Congress members and staffers about the beliefs of conscientious objectors because many are uninformed about what COs will and will not do in wartime, "peacetime," and during a draft. A participant, Judy Erickson said, "I approached the meeting as an opportunity to educate this staffer."

The lobby event in Washington began with opening remarks by Bill Galvin, Counseling Coordinator for the Center on Conscience & War, who spoke on the existence of COs throughout American history from Native American history to Colonial times to present. Marian Franz, Executive Director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund followed up Bill's remarks by talking about the

Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund bill. J.E. McNeil, Executive Director for the Center on Conscience & War, talked about the wide range of CO beliefs and about the possibility of the draft and concluded the opening remarks.

After a short training session on how to lobby, participants formed state delegations, discussed strategy, and went out to lobby. Over fifty House and Senate offices were visited. Congressional staff and members heard personal stories of conscientious objection in wars gone by; about the dangers that COs face today; about what can be done to give more rights to COs; about the rumors of draft reinstatement. Most in Congress said, however, that a draft is not needed to solve America's military problem; but most, if not all, said that a draft would be needed if there were another "national emergency." National emergency implies another war and one staffer went as far as saying, "another 9/11."

Congress has heard the voices of conscientious people. It is essential to continue the lobby efforts to build relationships with lawmakers so that, in the event of a serious proposal for the military draft, the rights of conscientious objectors will be protected. Go to www.nisbco.org for information on continuing the lobby effort.

To contact your members of Congress:

Representative/Senator _____
US Senate/House of Representatives
Washington DC, 20003



outside United Nations Buliding NY,NY Photo by Frank Capri

Continued from page 1

Movie on CO's is being made

Non-Violent Soldiers, a documentary about my conscientious objection to the Vietnam war. Although its my personal story, it also touches on the history of COs from Vietnam to the present. After three years of appeal, I finally won my CO case which was based on a personal religion rather than on the basis of an organized traditional religion. Renown documentary filmmaker Robert Richter is the producer. Contact Frank Capri Productions and mail to: 50 W. 34th St. (#23B1), New York, NY 10001 or email: fcapri@nyc.rr.com Its important that they leave a phone number. Thanks again. Peace, Frank Capri

an area inside the District of Columbia where the U.S. Army tested chemical weapons. In short, American University contributed to the war effort by turning over its campus and facilities, free of charge, to the Army during World War I. The Germans had already begun chemical munitions research by that point, and the U.S. military felt pressured to develop its own chemical weapons. Camp AU became the Chemical Warfare Services (now the U.S. Army Chemical Corps) main facility for chemical weapons testing.

In 1986, American University came across an old university newspaper article during a pre-construction examination of a site on campus. The article mentioned a chemical weapons burial site, and University officials became convinced that chemical munitions were still buried somewhere on campus. They notified both the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army of their findings. The Army sent an explosives team to the AU campus but did not test any soil and concluded that little or nothing had been buried in the area. When EPA analysts submitted a report later that year to the Army that detailed suspected areas of contamination, the Army still took no action and claimed that the AU campus and its nearby Spring Valley neighborhood were safe.

Since 1993, more and more discoveries of deadly chemical weapons have been made on construction sites and residential property. This kind of evidence is hard to ignore and, since then, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has returned on a few occasions

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to more or less clean up whatever they now admit is there. Nevertheless, until the current renewed cleanup effort that began in 2003, the Corps of Engineers' testing and conclusions have been incomplete and unsatisfactory to the Spring Valley Residents, the District of Columbia Department of Health, and some American University officials.

A simple timeline of this issue demonstrates to what degree the U.S. military resists accountability for its actions. If the Army had not been so careless in the first place much of the current problem would not exist. The U.S. military was allegedly unaware of the effects of chemical or other weapons on the environment until the Second World War. Thus, until the 1950s, there were very few regulations concerning the testing and dumping of weapons. If, once this knowledge sunk in, the Army had taken the time to go through its records of buried munitions and weapons testing facilities and tried to reverse some of its past damage, again, much of the current problem would not exist. Not only did the Army deny its own evidence of its methods of disposal and the risks of leaking buried chemical munitions, but it only sent its Corps of Engineers here when the university, the city or the residents absolutely demanded. It is not possible to file a lawsuit against the U.S. military; however, public pressure and consistent demands by a city and its residents (often over a period of years) might eventually get the military

to take some responsibility for its actions. The persistence of the District and its affected residents, along with the recent rise in news coverage in the last few years, have led to the Corps of Engineers biggest dig yet on the southwest edge of the American University campus. This project will span at least two years and will cost 11 million.

Despite this victory, it is not possible to erase over 85 years of pollution. Some soil in the affected areas has such high levels of arsenic that the only option is immediate removal. A number of Spring Valley residents have been afflicted with rare forms of cancer, and some attribute their condition to the pollution caused by the chemical weapons testing. According to the National Cancer Institute, Washington, D.C. has the highest rate of death caused by cancer in the country. The rates for both women and men are significantly higher than the national average, without even taking into account long-term residents who died outside of the District. As of yet, no studies have been conducted to link the chemical pollution with illness or environmental damage. However, the next article in this series will cover more details of the nature of the weapons found thus far and their potential effects on residents.

Editor's note...Article 2 of this series on War and the Environment will include an update on the World War 1 chemical munition situation in Washington D.C. The article will go into other examples of how the U.S. military has adversely affected other communities around the country.



Eyes wide Open Memorial, Upper Senate Park,
Washington D.C.

“Eyes Wide Open: The Human cost of War in Iraq”

This exhibit was created by AFSC Great Lakes Regional Office Staff in Chicago, in collaboration with other AFSC colleagues, and will travel to more than 10 cities.

Over 800 pairs of combat boots, each with a tag bearing the name of a U.S. soldier who died in the Iraq war were placed on the Capitol grounds.

Next to it was a 32-foot long wall of names of Iraqi civilians who also have died.

“We will lay down these boots and embrace this wall of names in the capital of the United States to show this nation and the world the human cost of this unjustified and immoral war that has now spiraled into unconscionable abuse of prisoners and chaos.”

Mary Ellen McNish, General Secretary,
American Friends Service Committee.

“Wouldn’t it be great if we didn’t have to stand up with signs that said Torture was bad.”

J.E. McNeil,
Executive Director, Center on Conscience
and War.



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From the Desk of the Executive Director

Recognize that those who plant trees may not live to enjoy the fruit. "How to Hang in There for the Long Haul" by Don Irish, Fellowship Magazine, January 1997.

Every Life is Precious. Sign at The Power and Promise of Peace Interfaith Service sponsored by National Council of Churches USA on May 27, 2004.

I spent several hours in my garden this week. I planted my tomatoes and peppers. I got the soil ready for my okra (I told you I was Southern). I picked my lettuce and dill. My rhubarb—newly planted last year to replace the loss of my entire patch—needs at least another year before I will be able to make pie again.

I spoke to a young Puerto Rican today about getting out of the army. He wants to stay in to get money for college. I explained how the money for college almost never comes (only 50% of those who sign up for it get anything, only 6% get it all). "If I have to go to Iraq I will, but I would rather stay near my family." I warned him that with his specialty he would probably go. And I thought of all the names of U.S. and Iraqi dead that had scrolled before me the night before at the interfaith service and all the names on the boots [see picture on page 7] I had seen the day before that. So many of them Hispanic, so many of them from rural states, so many from poor urban areas.

Also spoke with several men this week about getting a conscientious objector discharge. One looks hopeful. The others not so

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much so. They called too late for real help. I get so angry when that happens. But for people to know we are here, we would need a budget five or six times larger than the one we have. For now I will scramble around trying to find an attorney that can help—hopefully for free. I will spend some of my time to keep the costs down.

My work, of course, is built on the work of those who went before me. The work of those who will come after me will be built on mine. Some of my work involves almost immediately knowing whether I was able to help—similar to the planting of lettuce. More of my work is like the planting of tomatoes and okra. Not immediate results, but not a long time either. But there is other work—the flinging of wildflower seeds by the parkways in Texas when I was young, the planting of a fig or apple or pawpaw now—that I may never know the fruits of. But work, I must, if anyone is to see those fruits.

And none of it happens without that precious manure of money.

So remember our garden that we grow here together. Remember us with contributions now and in your wills. We may never know the fruits, but we do know that others will and that they, too, will plant more fruits for those who come after them.

But it takes a lot of manure!

Yours for Peace and Justice,
J.E. McNeil



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