

ACTION REPORT



Four More Years of the Afghanistan War? Not On Our Watch!

—by Kevin Martin, Executive Director

When I first heard a report of President Obama's decision to remove only 5,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan this year (which turned out to be only half what he announced June 22, with another 23,000 troops to leave by September, 2012), my first thought was "did he forget a zero?"

The decision was disappointing but not surprising. Remember, candidate Obama promised to escalate the Afghanistan war (which he did, twice), and as president he has committed himself to "winning" it (whatever that means, I'm reminded of the pacifist Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin's quote, "You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake").

Moreover, the military has consistently and effectively influenced the president's decisions on the war, with former "Secretary of War" Robert Gates, Generals David Petraeus, Stanley McChrystal and others constantly speaking in public and to the media "setting policy," which the president has enabled (Truman or Eisenhower would doubtless have fired them for that).

The President's decision to prolong the war despite escalating public and

congressional pressure surely reflects the malign influence of the Military-Industrial Complex (though I don't mean to give the president a pass here, he is accountable for his decisions). The MIC won't be taken down quickly or easily, perhaps not in our lifetimes.

But it will be taken down. The U.S. Empire is on the decline. Let's replace it with a flowering U.S. Republic (in the phrase of the philosopher Johan Galtung). Protesting the wars and scourges of the Empire is only half our job. Empowering people to envision and decide what comes after, or along with, that decline is even more important. Even some in the military realize the U.S. needs a new foreign policy, one based less on belligerence and military might and more on peaceful diplomacy and international cooperation, as the recent "Mr. Y" article showed (see wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/A_National_Strategic_Narrative.pdf).

At a recent reception near the United Nations at which I was humbled to be honored by non-governmental organizations that work at the UN, I asked attendees to close their eyes and envision that more peaceful, just world we will help build as the Empire declines.

I asked folks to shout out what they envisioned.

"A peaceful future for our children," "meaningful jobs for all," "an environment restored, with green energy technology and good public transit," "health care for everyone" and "the end of nuclear power" were just some of the inspiring visions shared that night. It was beautiful!

So this is not a time to despair. Yes, we at Peace Action are sick of all wars, whether a Republican or Democrat is in the White House. But signs of our successes at shaping that new world abound:

- » Public opinion is now solidly against the Afghanistan war—that's our doing!
- » The House and Senate finally sent strong messages to Obama of their opposition to the war, mostly because of our hard work.
- » Congress is pushing the administration on the illegality of the Libya war.
- » (Now former) "Secretary of War" Gates on the defensive in his last Senate hearing, reduced to declaring about Afghanistan

Continued on page 7...

In This Issue

Four More Years?	1
Hiroshima & Nagasaki Commemorations	2
Town Hall Meetings	3
What About Women?	4
One-Minute Activist	5
InSane!	5
Affiliates in Action	6
Legacy of Peace	6
Peace Conference	7

Stay Up-to-Date Online
peace-action.org
peacevoter.org
studentpeaceaction.org

Designed & Edited by: Farida Sheralam
Executive Director: Kevin Martin

Vol. 50 number 2 (ISSN 0036-4304)

Published quarterly for supporters of Peace Action and the Peace Action Education Fund. All rights reserved.

Reprinting permitted if Peace Action or Peace Action Education Fund is credited. Back issues available on microfilm from University Microfilm International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 (313) 761-4700. Annual membership, \$40 (\$15 for those on limited income). Add \$8/year for membership outside US. Send address changes with label from current issue to:

Peace Action
8630 Fenton Street, Suite 524
Silver Spring MD. 20910
ph (301) 565-4050, fx (301) 562-7305

This issue was printed the week of 07/04/11.

Hiroshima & Nagasaki Commemorations

By Yeabu Conteh, Development Associate



Every year around August 6 and 9, Peace Action and its grassroots network of chapters and affiliates host and participate in activities to commemorate the anniversaries of the 1945 nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

This year, the tradition will continue with festivals, candle-lighting and other creative remembrances of those who lost their lives or were injured during these attacks. Peace Action will reach out to local communities to stress the importance of building the movement for zero nuclear weapons at the local, national and international levels. We want to make sure that nuclear weapons are never used again.

In addition to activities here at home, representatives from Peace Action are also invited every year to Japan by our sister peace group Gensuikin to join Japanese and other peace activists from around the world in solidarity and remembrance of those horrible attacks.

Last year, Peace Action's Organizing and Policy Director Paul Kawika Martin travelled to Japan where he spoke before

thousands of peace activists from Japan and other countries around the world.

Planned Events

- » July 16, Massachusetts Peace Action will host a **festival for a Nuclear Free Future**, connecting nuclear weapons and the use of nuclear power on the anniversary of the first nuclear weapons test.
- » Genesee Valley Citizens for Peace will have its **annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki evening** in Avon, New York (date to be announced). Following a solemn vigil, there will be lighting of candles music by local musicians. More information will be available on their website at gvcp.org.
- » Sunday, August 7, 2011, at Loose Park Lake in Kansas City, Missouri, PeaceWorks Kansas City is having its **annual Hiroshima-Nagasaki Remembrance**. Activities will include 45 lanterns for 1945, the year the atomic bomb was dropped, 66 gongs for 66 years since the bombing, 30 large mounted posters from the Hiroshima Peace Cultural Museum and guest speakers.

In the coming weeks, Peace Action will have a complete list of activities planned by our grassroots network around Hiroshima and Nagasaki Days. Visit peace-action.org for more information.

Town Hall Meetings: Old as Dirt and Still Effective

By Judith Le Blanc, Field Director

Before email, Twitter and Facebook, folks gathered in town hall meetings to voice their views and hold their elected officials accountable. Back in the day, it was one of the only ways for the people to be heard. Town hall meetings continue to have real impact on policy makers. Think about the town hall meetings held during the healthcare debate!

A town hall meeting can convey support for elected officials who are in the fight to end the wars and for economic justice for our communities, or raise non-violent hell for those who are not!

This summer, the peace movement has the opportunity to participate in town halls and give voice to the overwhelming public support for ending the Afghanistan war and cutting Pentagon spending.

The Congressional Progressive Congress is organizing town hall "Speak Outs for

*Check the
Progressive
Congress website
for more "Speak
Outs for Good
Jobs Now" events:
speakouttour.com*

July 16: Miami, FL
July 18: Pittsburgh, PA
July 19: Philadelphia, PA
July 20: Boston, MA
July 21: Houston, TX
July 22: Portland, OR
July 23: Seattle, WA
August 16: Oakland, CA

Good Jobs Now." For Peace Action and the peace movement, the "Speak Outs for Good Jobs Now" and other town halls (TBA) are important places to argue for demilitarizing the federal budget to free

up the resources our towns and cities desperately need.

The peace movement is used to vigiling, lobbying and marching. The speakouts are all about public education. We need to be there to provide facts on why cutting the Pentagon budget opens up the possibility of investing in jobs programs and rebuilding our infrastructure. On June 20, 2011, the U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution calling for the federal government to change its spending priorities and redirect military spending to domestic needs. We are making real headway now with local officials who are dealing with severe budget crunches.

The new president of the US Conference of Mayors, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa told reporters, "This is not a war resolution. What we wanted to make clear is the best way to support and honor those troops is to give them a job when they come back home."

*Stay tuned for our new website,
which will be launched in the coming weeks!
[www.Peace-Action.org!](http://www.Peace-Action.org)*

What About Women?

Excerpt from Jean Athey's blog during her recent trip to Afghanistan

(Jean is Secretary of the national Peace Action board and a leader of Peace Action Montgomery County, Maryland.)

May 12, 2011: Women, of course, constitute half the population of Afghanistan. Their oppression under the Taliban government was used by the Bush administration as a way to garner sympathy and support for the war. At first, women seemed to have benefited from the invasion.

In Kabul, anyway, following the overthrow of the Taliban, women could leave the house without being accompanied by a male family member, work outside the home, and go to school. In the rest of the country, though, very little changed for women.

"Reconciliation" is viewed with alarm among women in Kabul; they worry that the limited human rights they now have will be taken from them if the Taliban joins the government.

In fact, the Taliban has set three preconditions that the government



"Reconciliation" is viewed with alarm among women in Kabul; they worry that the limited human rights they now have will be taken from them if the Taliban joins the government.

must agree to prior to any discussions taking place:

- » Women must not be allowed to go to school;
- » Women must not be allowed to go out of the house unless accompanied by a man; and
- » All foreign troops must leave the country.

Women I spoke with in Kabul emphasized that support for the basic human rights of women on the part of the Afghan government is extremely shallow. A high proportion of both the legislators and the ministers are former war lords and Mujahideen, and their views on women differ very little from those of the Taliban.

One women's advocate told me that Afghan government leaders say they support human rights for women only because of the desire to continue the flow of international money. As soon as the money dries up, the "support" for women will disappear.



Peace Action's Executive Director Kevin Martin was honored on June 8th during a reception at the German Mission to the United Nations in New York City, along with former Bangladeshi Ambassador Anwarul Chowdury.

The event celebrated the work of non-governmental organizations at the UN, including Peace Action, a leader among the NGOs at the UN.

One Minute Activist

Have Your Say in the Budget Debate

Outrageous military spending is one of the top reasons why the U.S. faces an economic crisis. We spend on the military almost as much as the rest of the world's nations combined, maintain over 800 foreign bases (China has none), are currently fighting three wars thousands of miles from our shores, and plan to completely modernize our nuclear weapons complex and arsenal.

None of this strengthens our economy, nor the things we really need to be a secure nation—peace with the world and investments in education, health care, housing, environmental protection and green energy and jobs.

For decades, Peace Action has been a strong proponent of, and a leader in,

the movement to cut military spending and make meeting the needs of our communities a priority.

When the budget debate began a few months ago, Peace Action, in

Outrageous military spending is one of the top reasons why the U.S. faces an economic crisis.

conjunction with the National Priorities Network, felt it was time for ordinary Americans—those most affected by budget decisions—to have their say. Three very different budget plans have

been proposed: President Obama's Budget, the Ryan/GOP Budget and the People's Budget. The National Priorities Network, consisting of groups working to reduce military spending in order to invest in jobs and vital public services for millions of Americans, has developed an online poll to give everyone an opportunity to have their voice heard in this budget debate.

Go to peace-action.org, and click on Peace-Action **New Priorities Budget Preference Poll** and take a minute to compare the three plans. Then take the poll to tell Congress what you think the nation's priorities should be! Cast your vote for the plan that best represents your values and vision for our nation in 2012—and beyond! Thank you!

INSANE!

To secure passage of the modest **New START Treaty** in December, President Obama struck a deal with conservative Republicans, allegedly to gain their votes for treaty ratification.

The deal included plans to upgrade the US nuclear weapons complex and arsenal at a price tag of well over **\$200 billion** over the next decade.

Luckily, this money is not all "in the bag," Congress will have to approve the various funds every year, and Peace Action and our allies will fight tooth and nail to stop these misappropriations of our tax dollars.

President Obama's 2009 speech in Prague clearly stated his commitment to a nuclear weapons-free world. How can we

possibly move closer to that goal while spending hundreds of billions of dollars, in such dire economic times, to upgrade and "modernize" our entire nuclear arsenal and production complex?

It's not only unwise and hypocritical, it's insane.



Affiliates in Action

By Tim Rinne, Nebraskans for Peace State Coordinator

Peace Action's new affiliate—Nebraskans for Peace—chimed in on the “Global Day of Action on Military Spending,” April 12, with a public rally at the Federal Building in the state capital of Lincoln.

Playing off of Nebraskans' legendary fiscal conservatism and hostility to ‘big government,’ Nebraskans for Peace plugged the message of “Goin’ Broke Paying for Pentagon Pork” and “REDUCE THE DEFICIT —Cut the Military Budget

in Half.” The rally speakers included a University of Nebraska-Lincoln accounting professor.

He hammered home the fact that the Government Accountability Office hasn't been able to complete an audit of the Pentagon's books in twenty years, and that former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld himself revealed in 2001 that the department couldn't account for trillions of dollars in appropriations.

In calling for a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, Nebraska political legend and former State Senator, Ernie Chambers also warned the crowd of the “wicked” nature of the U.S. military-industrial complex.

The military, he stated, just determines what it wants and Congress writes the check, while “Little Orphan Annie has to count pennies and beg.”

Legacy of Peace: Peace Empowerment Program (PEP)

Hundreds of Peace Action members have chosen to support the organization with recurring or installment donations. Recurring donations are easy to set-up and eliminate the need for reminder calls and mail. Recurring gifts also afford members an opportunity to give more annually to their favorite peace organization on installments than they can in a single gift.

For example, a donor giving \$100 a year may consider doubling their support in response to an appeal a budgetary challenge while giving \$50 in quarterly installments a workable investment in peace.

Installment gifts can be as small as \$5 a month or as large as you would make them. This month, Peace Action is encouraging you to consider becoming a recurring donor. Peace Action's installment giving plan, the Peace Empowerment Program, is a major source of revenue needed to run our campaigns for a more peaceful and just future.

Donors by mail receive a monthly bulletin to keep them updated on our campaigns and outline actions you can take to support legislation and policy alternatives on issues you care about; ending the wars and occupations in

Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, moving the money from the Pentagon back to our communities and abolishing nuclear weapons.

To join, fill out the coupon on the back of this month's action report and send it to our national office.

Whether or not you join the Peace Empowerment Program this month, please keep this giving option in mind.

Recurring donations provide a reliable source of revenue we can plan on. And thank you for your generous and steadfast support of Peace Action.

October 21 & 22, 2011

A U.S. peace movement capacity building conference:

Peace in Asia and the Pacific Alternatives to Militarization

American University, Washington, DC

Peace Action is joining a number of peace and solidarity groups in the US and from the Asia Pacific region to hold a conference to help understand and respond to new developments and the dangers of a militarized US policy in the Asia-Pacific region.

The conference call says, "Our movements to prevent war and to address the impacts of the militarization of the federal budget are not prepared

to challenge the long-term designs of the Pentagon, the right-wing and the Military-Industrial-Complex to reinforce and deepen U.S. militarism across the Asia-Pacific."

Through workshops, plenary sessions and networking, the conference provides an opportunity to examine possible campaigns and ways to build solidarity with peace movements and campaigns in the region.

Peace Action is cosponsoring the conference with:

- » American Friends Service Committee
- » American University's Nuclear Studies Institute
- » Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament
- » Historians Against the War
- » Korean Policy Initiative and Nodudtol, an organization based in New York, and made up of a community of first through fourth generation Koreans living in the U.S. working against war, militarization and gender and racial discrimination.

Four More Years of the Afghanistan War?

Continued from page 1...

- "it's not a war without end."
- » The recent U.S. Conference of Mayors resolutions calling for redirecting war spending to human needs and advocating the global elimination of nuclear weapons.
 - » The military budget is still gargantuan, but the organizing and political climate for working on this issue is the best we've seen in decades – our Move the Money campaign is growing every day!

- » Next year's Peace Voter 2012 campaign could be one of our most important yet, as citizen-activists take control of the debate over wars, military spending and nuclear weapons and force House, Senate and Presidential candidates to address our issues on our terms!
- » The Peace Action affiliate and chapter network is growing, very impressively, into new states and regions (please see the "Affiliates

in Action" article and photo of our new affiliate, Nebraskans for Peace in this issue!)

Peace and justice work is hard, there's no question about it. That's why we call it "the struggle," not "the picnic." But we have momentum, and the power of the people, on our side, let's never forget that, and most importantly, let's organize that power!

Enclosed is my investment in Peace Action Education Fund's effective grassroots organizing, public mobilizing, and congressional education:

MAG112

\$40 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$_____

Visa, Mastercard, Discover: _____ Exp. _____

Name as it appears on card: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

Thank you for your generous support!



*Yes, I would like to join Peace Action's
Peace Empowerment Program:*

MAG112

\$30/month \$20/month \$10/month Other \$_____/month

\$50/quarter \$25/quarter \$15/quarter Other \$_____/quarter

Charge my Visa, Mastercard, Discover: _____ Exp. _____

Electronically bill my checking account. This account should be used for billing purposes:

Routing # _____ Account # _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

**Town Hall Meetings!
...Inside**

The merger of SANE and The Freeze
8630 Fenton Street, Suite 524
Silver Spring MD, 20910



NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
HANOVER MD
PERMIT No. 149