

# ACTION REPORT



The Quarterly Newsletter of Peace Action and the Peace Action Education Fund Spring 2009 Vol.47 No. 3

## CREATING SPACE FOR PEACE

BY: **BARBRA BEARDEN**, COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATE

Peace Action is leading the charge to prevent an escalation of the military presence in Afghanistan. We've reached out through the grassroots to lobby for general and specific actions to mitigate civilian deaths and promote a peaceful relationship between our two countries.



DRONES FLOWN REMOTELY INTO PAKISTAN BY CIA OFFICERS IN THE U.S.

Al Jazeera reports that since August 2008 thirty drone strike attacks were conducted in the mountainous region between Pakistan and Afghanistan – killing over 300 people. Since the Obama Administration took office another five attacks have occurred. In March one night time raid killed at least twenty-two people in Kurram. According to the *New York Times* this particular strike expands on the Bush Administration program by targeting

compounds now controlled by non-Taliban combatants.

Thomas Johnson, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School said on NPR that no amount of technology can replace looking out a cockpit window and seeing what you are firing at. In fact, these bombs indiscriminately destroy everything in the villages they hit – mothers, children, farm land, and Taliban alike.

The sweeping lethality of drone strikes is a point of contention with the people of Pakistan and provides more incentive to resist U.S. cooperation. Protests in Afghanistan and Pakistan have heated up. A handful of protestors were killed recently during what started as a peaceful march from Baraki Barak to Pul-E-Alam. A small group of protestors threw rocks at Afghan police who responded with gun fire. According to local sources, this discontent with the U.S. presence in the region is a valuable

recruiting tool for the Taliban and al-Qaida.

This is where the potential for danger becomes more acute. Cooperation with a stable Pakistani government and the people of Pakistan is essential for maintaining security in Afghanistan and for creating a safe space for human rights in the region.

In another NPR interview David Kilcullen, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, said, "...if you want to make the population feel safe, striking the enemy doesn't actually help you that much." He continued, "after they've been awoken by the explosion, it's not particularly comforting to be told that the bomb was intended for a 'bad guy.' [It] doesn't make them feel safe."

Peace Action has begun its campaign for Afghanistan in earnest. Our first step is to emphatically oppose the troop escalation called for by the Obama Administration. We need a comprehensive diplomatic plan for Afghanistan – not another shock and awe display. We organized our network of activists and 19 national organizations to get 14 Congressional Representatives to write a letter the President asking him to hold off on the surge until he had a comprehensive plan to keep the peace.

The U.S. must support the Pakistani government in talks with the Taliban while maintaining a high standard for human rights. A united front for diplomacy and human rights will help bolster international support and strengthen the important relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan. Stopping drone strikes is the first step toward that united front: Pakistan could take credit for stopping the violence and win the support of its people; the U.S. could join in diplomatic talks to stabilize Afghanistan; and the Taliban could lose its number one recruiting tool.

**FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ON THE U.S. PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN GO TO [WWW.PEACE-ACTION.ORG](http://WWW.PEACE-ACTION.ORG) AND SIGN UP FOR ACTION ALERTS.**



THE TRIBAL AREA BETWEEN THE BORDERS OF PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

# GLOBAL ORGANIZING

## CALLING ALL REVOLUTIONARIES! BY: KEVIN MARTIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At a meeting in Washington recently, two veteran, respected colleagues in the nuclear disarmament field cautioned against pushing the Obama Administration too far on the president's stated support for a world free of nuclear weapons. They tried to make the case that we need to be cautious and only advocate for incremental arms control measures. One of them said, "We don't want to encourage a revolution of rising expectations."

In reaction, I said to myself, "You're doggone right we do!"

That's one of the things we do at Peace Action, help to raise expectations, to hold up a vision of a more peaceful and just world that goes beyond the necessary short-term changes in U.S. foreign and military policy.

We will continue to work hard for incremental progress including: Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); a new treaty for further nuclear weapons reductions between the U.S. and Russia; de-alerting of nuclear weapons (taking them off hair-trigger

alert status); and, improved non-proliferation policies.

Soon we will launch a grassroots campaign calling on President Obama to "leapfrog" over some incremental nuclear weapons issues by initiating international negotiations for a treaty to abolish nuclear weapons during the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review period. The process begins this May with a Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meeting in New York and culminates in May, 2010 with the NPT Review Conference (RevCon). It's a golden opportunity for the U.S. to provide leadership, in alliance with other states, to rid the planet of the scourge of nuclear weapons.

We adopt this strategy for all of our priority issue campaigns – rolling up our sleeves to tackle bad policies in the short-term and provide peaceful solutions for the long-term. We were one of the first U.S. peace organizations to speak up against the escalation of troops into Afghanistan while providing productive avenues for diplomacy with all parties. After almost a decade of war our outreach is raising expectations for

long-term solutions and laying the groundwork for a new U.S. foreign policy based on international cooperation and human rights, not the self-defeating "global war on terror."

On the military budget, we aim to frame the issue as it really is. **EITHER THE U.S. CAN MAINTAIN THE WORLD'S MOST BLOATED, COSTLY MILITARY MACHINE; OR, WE CAN SAVE SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, MEDICAID AND INVEST IN EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND A GREEN ECONOMY.** We can't do both, and our children can't afford for us to do the former. In the short-term we are advocating for "smart cuts" – outdated Cold War weapons and missile defense systems are two places primed to get the axe. The long-term goal is clear: more money for people and less for war.

I hope you can tell how excited I am, as is everyone on the staff and in the leadership of Peace Action, at the prospects for progress toward peace we now embrace. Let's be revolutionaries; let's raise expectations, for half-hearted, moderate measures won't do if we are to fix the problems faced by our country and the world.

## TAKE ACTION ON THESE ISSUES

**US HOUSE: WASHINGTON DC, 20515; HOUSE.GOV**

**US SENATE: WASHINGTON DC, 20510; SENATE.GOV**

**CONGRESSIONAL SWITCHBOARD 202-224-3121**

**FIND OUT WHO REPRESENTS YOU AT: CONGRESS.ORG.**

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# THE WAR ECONOMY

## PUTTING THE PENTAGON ON A DIET

By: **SETH LONG**, DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

Pentagon spending has reached unprecedented levels not seen since World War II. This year, including nuclear weapons and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, 58% of the U.S. discretionary budget will go towards \$687 billion in war and weapons spending. With an economic crisis creating shortfalls in state and local budgets the amount spent on militarization has never been as egregious as it is today.

Fortunately, the call to cut Pentagon spending, concentrate on diplomatic solutions to conflict, and invest in human needs is growing louder by the day. In Congress, U.S. Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) has championed a 25% cut in Pentagon spending by eliminating obsolete Cold War weapons, and ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even Defense Secretary Gates is leading the push for responsible reductions in defense spending, though he does not go nearly as far as we do in advocating for a Peace Economy.

Despite top level support, our effort to put the Pentagon on a diet will require a swell of grassroots citizen activism and Congressional lobbying if we're going to see real progressive change in budget priorities. Weapons contracts are just the kind of pork spending Representatives like to bring back to their states. Even the most progressive politician may resist weapons program cuts fearing job losses and union backlash.

**PEACE ACTION IS RE-ENGINEERING OUR CAMPAIGN FOR A PEACE ECONOMY.** Seymour Melman, former SANE (predecessor to Peace Action) Co-Chair, took on the issue of job creation and budget priorities starting in the 1970's. He led our understanding of economic conversion - the political and technical process of shifting the economy from military to civilian production - and advanced the argument that peace can create jobs better than war can.

Last February we co-sponsored the conference "Security Without Empire," organized by American Friends Service Committee. U.S. military bases in Japan and Italy cost the U.S. taxpayer an exorbitant amount of money to maintain and those two are only the tip of the iceberg. The U.S. has over 700 foreign military bases across the globe with an estimated price tag of \$100 billion dollars per year.

On Tax Day, April 15<sup>th</sup>, Peace Action affiliates around the nation will coordinate Penny Poll Protests to educate their communities on our national priorities ([READ MORE ON PAGE 6](#)). We'll reach out to people in their homes, at local events, and through the media to expose how their taxes are spent.



### PEACE ACTION IN 2009

AN OVERVIEW OF OUR  
PROGRAM OBJECTIVES FOR  
THE COMING YEAR.

**INITIATE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE GLOBAL ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS** through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty process in 2009-10

**COMPLETE U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM IRAQ** by June, 2010, with no residual forces or permanent U.S. bases, and commit funds to helping Iraq rebuild itself

**STOP THE ESCALATION OF 17,000 ADDITIONAL U.S. TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN;** initiate negotiations with various constituencies in Afghanistan and countries in the region to end the strife there, increase humanitarian aid, and bring U.S. forces home

**REDUCE THE BLOATED U.S. MILITARY BUDGET** working with U.S. Rep. Barney Frank and others

**FORESWEAR ANY MILITARY ATTACK ON IRAN,** and initiate high-level, diplomatic talks to resolve tensions over Iran's nuclear program, and build a constructive new U.S.-Iranian relationship

# MILITARY RECRUITMENT

## JUST SAY NO TO WAR

BY: JONATHAN WILLIAMS, STUDENT PEACE ACTION COORDINATOR

Ever since the successful anti-draft activism of the Vietnam era, the Department of Defense (DOD) has focused more and more resources on recruiting younger and younger Americans for military service. In a struggle to maintain the supposed "all-volunteer" military, recruiters have come to rely on increasingly predatory and deceitful methods to meet their quotas – everything from lying about military benefits to boot camps in elementary schools to "data mining" our private information.

### AS WE ENTER INTO OUR 9<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OCCUPYING AFGHANISTAN AND THE 7<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OCCUPYING IRAQ, THE MILITARY IS FINDING IT HARDER AND HARDER TO RECRUIT NEW "VOLUNTEERS."

Last year, the DOD requested a total of \$20.5 billion for 2009 recruitment alone, up from the already bloated \$4 billion budget in 2003.

Under increasing pressure to meet quotas, the military preferentially targets our most disadvantaged youth. According to the DOD, in 2004, 71% of black recruits, 65% of Latino recruits, and 58% of white recruits came from below-median-income neighborhoods. Recruiters promise money for college, healthcare when you return from duty, and a "way out" of poverty.

In reality, these promises are rarely kept. Under the current Montgomery GI Bill, in order to be eligible for college funding, enlisted military personnel are required to deduct a non-refundable "deposit" of \$100 from their salary each month for the first 12 months they are in the military to help pay for the program, unless they opt-out. According to the American Friends Service Committee, only 43% of the military personnel that have paid into this program have ever received anything, and 57% have never received a dime! Moreover, the maximum benefit is only \$9,036 per year, and the average pay out was only \$5,540 per year in 2004. These benefits do not even cover half of the average cost of tuition, which, according to AFSC, is \$12,127 per year at a public college and \$29,026 per year at a private college.

Likewise, the Veterans Administration is equally intransigent when paying out healthcare benefits to

# LEAVE A LEGACY OF PEACE

CHRISTOPHER SCHEFLER

CONSTANCE W. LANGTRY

FRANCIS AND EDITH SEARS

AILEEN CRAMER

LEO SEREN

ROBERT SCHWARTZ

GEORGE KAPP

ESTHER A. STAVIS

CATHERINE HESS

### FREDRICK RONALD MANBRIDGE

*"For like nothing else in the world, hope arouses a passion for the possible, a determination that our children not be asked to shoulder burdens we let fall."*

Peace Action President Emeritus, Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr. (June 1, 1924-April 12, 2006)

### TO BEQUEATH A LEGACY OF PEACE

CONTACT PETER DECCY: 301.565.4050 EXT. 326  
OR PDECCY@PEACE-ACTION.ORG

returning veterans. In a July 2008 report by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the committee estimated that at least one fourth of its 630,000 disability claims last year took over six months to process. In its 2009 budget request, the VA estimated it would have a backlog of 872,000 claims this year.

As the primary targets of recruiters, students and youth are the most affected by their predatory practices. We face constant harassment from deceitful recruiters. Our schools are required to send our personal information to the Pentagon without our consent. The bloated military budget diverts much-needed funding away from our schools, campuses, and

communities.

This spring, we will collect "intel" on the military recruitment practices in our very own schools and communities. Over the summer we will use this information as we gather for a national conference in Chicago, hosted by the National Network Opposing the Militarization of our Youth (NNOMY). There we will develop our strategy for the upcoming school year to kick recruiters out of our schools, educate our peers on the reality of military service, distribute information on alternative careers and scholarship programs, and build the leadership of our generation.

# LOCAL ACTION IRAQ

## "BRING HOME THE NATIONAL GUARD" CAMPAIGN GROWING

BY: YEABU CONTEH, DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

Since the expiration of the 2002 Authorization to federalize the U.S. National Guard (NG), there are still over 400,000 U.S. National Guard members in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is illegal and it impairs the ability for states to respond to emergencies.

**ACROSS THE NATION, PEACE ACTION AFFILIATES ARE WORKING WITH THE CAMPAIGN TO DE-FEDERALIZE THE NATIONAL GUARD.**

We're building awareness and lobbying to bring the National Guard home and prevent any future deployment. I interviewed national Peace Action board member Jean Athey from Maryland about the campaign.

### WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGN?

"I see it as one way to prevent the government from conducting future wars. If we can stop the government from using the Guard in this manner, we will greatly lessen the number of available bodies that can be used in foreign wars."

"This campaign is also about democracy—it demands that the government abide by the law. At a minimum, the states can demand that the government abide by its own law. Congress has essentially abrogated its responsibilities under the Constitution for declaring war. While we can continue to try to get Congress to get a backbone and resist executive branch wars, this legislation says that the states have a say in the matter of war."

### WHAT IS IT LIKE WHEN YOU TELL PEOPLE YOU THINK THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE NATIONAL GUARD IS ILLEGAL?

"Most people that we have talked with about the campaign have agreed with us on our goals. There seems to be a strong sense that the National Guard is treated unfairly, that they didn't really sign up to be front-line soldiers abroad. In addition, people believe that the NG belongs at home to protect us or help us with emergencies and disasters. Thus, people tend to support the campaign almost immediately."

### HOW CAN PEOPLE GET INVOLVED?

People can see if their state already has a project by checking this Web site: [WWW.BRINGTHEGUARDHOME.ORG](http://WWW.BRINGTHEGUARDHOME.ORG).

The Web site is run by Liberty Tree Foundation, a peace group located in Wisconsin.



JEAN ATHEY AT A RECENT PROTEST BEING ARRESTED.

### ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

In Maryland alone, nearly 6,000 National Guard members have been called to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan. **PEACE ACTION MONTGOMERY**, our affiliate in Maryland is helping lead its state campaign to bring the guard home. Thanks in part to Peace Action Montgomery, two pieces of legislation, **SB-901 AND HB-907**, were introduced in Congress. Both bills specifically outline why the National Guard should stay home.

### WHAT HAS BEEN THE MARYLAND GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO YOUR CAMPAIGN?

"Sadly, on March 7th our legislation was voted out of the house. We ran a good campaign - and we're not giving up. I spoke with Michael Fisher, the Vermont legislator who got the national campaign started, he told me that we had run an excellent campaign and that this is really radical and so we shouldn't expect that a legislature will agree to it."

"So, we're raising these questions about how our government goes to war, about rule of law, about treatment of the military (backdoor draft of the NG and Reserves), about the role of local governments to reflect the will of the people, and doing it in a way that people seem to respond to and 'get' it."

# AFFILIATES IN ACTION

## PEACE ACTION BRINGS TAXES HOME

BY: BARBRA BEARDEN, COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATE

On April 15<sup>th</sup> all across the country citizens of the United States will take their tax returns to the post office. Our taxes fuel the policies of our government for the good and the bad. This Tax Day, Peace Action Affiliates around the country will draw attention to the disproportionate funding the Pentagon receives over progressive priorities. They'll be holding Tax Day Penny Poll Protests at post offices around the country. **YOU CAN ORGANIZE ONE AT YOUR POST OFFICE BY GOING TO [WWW.PEACE-ACTION.ORG/PENNYPOLL](http://WWW.PEACE-ACTION.ORG/PENNYPOLL).**

There you can print out resources like petitions, instructions, and a fact sheet.



LEARNING ABOUT PENTAGON SPENDING  
AT A LOCAL FAIR IN CHICAGO

Almost 60% of the Federal Discretionary Budget goes straight to the Pentagon, leaving less than 11% to split between education, healthcare, and environmental protection. The Penny Poll allows individuals to decide for themselves how they would spend their taxes. The economy is on everyone's minds and this one-on-one interaction really helps drive our point home.

Last year the responses were telling. Most Americans polled would spend far more on social services - allocating 30% to education, 24% to health-care, and only 6% to the Pentagon. Results this year are highly anticipated given the shift in our economy and the rising number of people hit by the recession. We expect people to be all the more critical of how our government spends our money. Find an affiliate near you by going to our website or download the materials and organize your own Penny Poll!

## INSANE FOSSIL FUEL WARS

Our foreign policy throughout the Middle East is focused on securing the resources to feed our national dependence on oil. Much of that dependence is linked to oil consumption by the military. It's an endless cycle of deadly conflict to profit war contractors and oil companies.

A recent report by the National Priorities Project, published in January, found that up to 30% of United States military spending goes towards securing energy supplies around the world. In 2009, the U.S. will spend an estimated \$100 billion securing energy access through the military and only \$1.26 billion in renewable energy. According to the U.S. Defense Energy Support Center Fact Book the DOD spent approximately \$8.2 billion directly on energy, seven times more than the United States spent on energy efficiency in 2004.

A 2003 Pentagon report detailed the impact of our oil dependency: food and water shortages leading to riots; land loss resulting in territory wars; and the startling potential for nuclear war as fossil fuels become scarcer.

Rather than creating sustainable alternatives the U.S. government has been chasing an outdated technology around the globe. The world cannot continue along this path; it's INSANE.

## STAY UP-TO-DATE ONLINE

[PEACE-ACTION.ORG](http://PEACE-ACTION.ORG)

[PEACEVOTER.ORG](http://PEACEVOTER.ORG)

[SPAN WEBSITE](http://SPAN WEBSITE)

[WWW.STUDENTPEACEACTION.ORG](http://WWW.STUDENTPEACEACTION.ORG)

DESIGNED & EDITED BY: BARBRA J. BEARDEN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: KEVIN MARTIN

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1100 Wayne Ave. Suite 1020  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
ph (301)565-4050, fx (301)565-0850

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# GLOBAL POLITICS

## TAPPING THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

BY: **BARBRA BEARDEN**, COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATE

The political discourse about Iran has focused on nuclear programs and irreconcilable differences between the leaderships of our two countries. Sadly, this rhetoric leaves out the tremendous legacy of student activism in the country and the untapped resource of Iran's youth. They are bringing a new type of Iranian culture to the forefront – one that embraces modernity, human rights, and religious freedom.

According to Radio Free Europe, since the first student uprising in 1979 there have been many, less publicized, attempts by students to take political power. After the Islamic revolution the university system reopened in 1982. Students began to organize in earnest; supporting political candidates, staging demonstrations, and educating the public. As the movement for a new type of revolution grew so did government opposition to it. In 1999 a student uprising was violently put down by Tehran and the youth movement, again, went under the radar.

**OVER TWO THIRDS OF IRANIANS ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 30. THOSE STUDENTS ARE QUIETLY AND STRATEGICALLY FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PAST GENERATIONS.** CNN briefly reported on the subtle acts of civil disobedience Iranian youth are using to stand up against fundamentalist ideas. Many women will pull back their hijabs showing their hair in public. They wear make-up and openly talk with males outside their families. Five years ago, two students were arrested and flogged for holding hands in public. Our Political and Organizing Director, Paul Kawika Martin witnessed these types of civil disobedience when he was in Iran on a peace delegation in 2006.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* reports that student activism is lively in cyberspace as well. At websites focused on books or movies students find a relatively safe haven for alternative political discourse. "Relatively" because despite some anonymity the *Chronicle* reported, "two feminists, Maryam Hosseinkhah and Jelveh Javaheri, are in Evin Prison in Tehran, charged with 'putting out inaccurate news, stirring up public opinion and writing against the Islamic Republic' on the Internet."

Our job as activists in the U.S. is to educate our communities and our leaders. Peace Action does this through our affiliate network and Congressional education. Peace and cooperation between our two countries is possible; but support for peace will only come from the ground up. Tell your neighbors about Iranian youth, today.

## NOTABLE DATES

**APRIL 15:** Tax-day – Penny Poll Protests Nation-wide

**APRIL 22:** Earth day

**MAY 4 – 15:** Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Prep Conference

**MAY 21:** Afghan President Karzai's term expires

**JUNE:** Pentagon Progress Report on Afghanistan Due

**JUNE 12:** Iranian Presidential Elections

**AUGUST 6-9:** Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day observances

**AUGUST 14 -16:** Think Outside the Bomb Conference in New Mexico

**AUGUST 20:** Afghan Presidential & provincial elections scheduled

**SEPTEMBER 9 - 11:** NGO conference in Mexico City on Peace and Disarmament co-chaired by Peace Action

**OCTOBER 1:** President Obama's budget is enacted

**NOVEMBER 14 - 15:** International Peace Bureau conference in Washington, DC

**DECEMBER 9:** START treaty expires

IT IS UP TO US, THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN THE U.S. AND AROUND THE WORLD, TO SEE THAT NO NEW WARS START IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THAT THE U.S. OCCUPATIONS OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN ARE ENDED, AND THAT OUR NATION IS SET ON A PATH WHICH PROMOTES PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, AND SECURITY.

**I SUPPORT PEACE ACTION EDUCATION FUND'S WORK FOR PEACE IN THIS CRITICAL TIME OF GROWING INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT.**

There has never been a more important time for us to raise our voices for peace. Enclosed is my investment in Peace Action Education Fund's effective grassroots organizing, public mobilizing, and congressional education.

**Here is my donation for:**

\$40    \$100    \$250    \$500    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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THIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEACE ACTION EDUCATION FUND IS TAX-DEDUCTIBLE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!



## ONE MINUTE ACTIVIST

On Inauguration Day we welcomed President Obama to the White House with signs reading, **"MR. PRESIDENT, I HOPE FOR PEACE."** With all of the attention on the economy the President needs to be reminded that sending more troops to Afghanistan without a comprehensive plan is a recipe for disaster.

Take one minute and sign our message to the President, **"As a MEMBER OF PEACE ACTION, I AM WRITING TO URGE YOU TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR AFGHANISTAN BEFORE SENDING MORE OF OUR SOLDIERS INTO HARM'S WAY."**



**OBAMA SUPPORTERS AND PEACE ACTIVISTS GATHERED ON JANUARY 20TH TO ASK THE PRESIDENT FOR PEACE.**

[WWW.PEACE-ACTION.ORG/WEVOTEDFORCHANGE](http://WWW.PEACE-ACTION.ORG/WEVOTEDFORCHANGE)

Calling All Revolutionaries! INSIDE

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The merger of SANE and The Freeze  
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