

During a staged televised CNN "Town Hall" meeting, a businessman rises: "I'll gladly give up my right to protest in order to be safe!" Applause. Now more than ever, the people of the world are not safe from the U.S., and the people in the U.S. are not safe from the U.S.

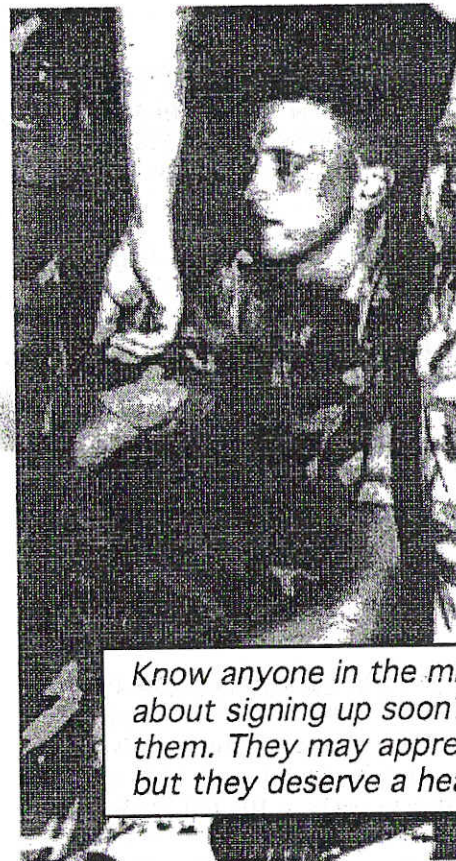
I will not wave the red, white and blue flag—instead I'll wear a green ribbon in solidarity with immigrants and Arab Americans facing increasing racist attacks. Stop the War. Support the troops—who refuse to fight.

Let's dedicate our lives to changing this situation, and ending all terror.

September 22, 2001



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A Message to Troops, Would-be ¹⁵ Troops, and other Youth

Know anyone in the military, or thinking about signing up soon? Pass this along to them. They may appreciate it, or not... but they deserve a heads up.

By Jeff Paterson

On August 30, 1990, 22-year-old Marine Corporal Jeff Paterson refused to board a military plane in Hawaii heading to Saudi Arabia. He was the first active-duty military resister in the U.S.-led attack on Iraq. The photo of Jeff Paterson sitting on the airstrip, defying orders to go fight in the Gulf War, appeared on TV and in newspapers around the world. Later Jeff edited the Anti-WARrior newsletter of military resistance to the Gulf War. Jeff currently resides in the San Francisco Bay Area and is a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist (www.oz.net/~vwawai). He can be reached through Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist, or directly at "EMAILJP@post.com".

In August 1990 I was an active duty US Marine Corps Corporal. I was ordered to the Middle East, the Gulf War was about to come. Four years prior—thinking I had nothing better to do with my life—I had walked into the Salinas, California recruiting station and told them to “put me where I was most needed”.

“What am I going to do with my life?” has always been huge question of youth, and today in the wake of the horror and tragedy of New York September 11th this question has increased importance for millions of young people.

No one who has seen the images will ever forget. In a scene as seemingly unreal as the Matrix, a conflict reached into American reality in an unthinkable way. Copy clerks to admin assistants, restaurant workers to firefighters—thousands of lives ripped away from friends and family. Now the television shouts, “revenge”, “infinite justice”, and “something must be done!” Wave a red, white and blue flag to ease the sorrow, to declare, “We’re not going to take it.”

And if I hadn’t spent those four years in the Marine Corps, I might be inclined to fall into line now. Most of the time my unit trained to fight a war against peasants who dared to struggle against “American interests” in their homelands—specifically Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. I saw dire poverty in the Philippines, US government-sanctioned prostitution rings to service servicemen in South Korea, and unbridled racism towards the peoples of Okinawa and Japan—the standard response to a child waving a “peace sign” at us with his fingers was “yaaa, ha ha, two bombs little gook.” I began to understand why billions of people around the world really do hate the United States—specifically it’s war machine, covert contra wars, and an increasing system of economic globalization that replaces hope with 12-hour days locked in sweatshops producing “Designed in the USA” exports.

Faced with this reality, I began the process of becoming un-American—meaning that the interests of the people of the world began to weigh heavier than my self-interest. I realized that the world did not need or want another U.S. troop. Although they did not look much like me, I found I had more in common with the common peoples of the Middle East than I did with those who were ordering me to kill them. My Battalion Commander’s reassurance that “if anything goes wrong we’ll nuke the rag heads until

they all glow” was not reassuring. Up against that, I publicly stated I would not be a pawn in America’s power plays for profits, oil, and domination of the Middle East. I pledged to resist, and if dragged out into the Saudi desert, I would refuse to fight. A few weeks later, I sat on the airstrip as hundreds of Marines—many of whom I had lived with for years—filed past me and boarded the plane. I fought the Gulf War from a military brig, and after worldwide anti-war protesters helped spring me, we fought the war in the streets.

But back then we failed to stop the war. Since 1990 over 1.5 million Iraqi people have died—not mainly from the massive US bombing from the sky, but from a decade of economic sanctions. All the while the US government has coldly declared that these Iraqi deaths are “worth it” in order to achieve strategic regional objectives. So today, as the US Government demands the world mourn with us for our loss, we in turn are expected to ignore the suffering that this nation produces.

Every time the war machine is kicked into high gear, acknowledgements are made about past “mistakes”: Gulf War Sickness, Agent Orange and napalm in Viet Nam, massacres of refugees in Korea, U.S. troops used as nuclear exposure guinea pigs after World War II. And always: “Trust us, this time it will be different”. But it never is.

One need not be a pacifist, a Communist, a Quaker, or a humanist to oppose this war. However, it certainly helps to be an Internationalist—realizing that our collective future is bound with the majority of humanity, and not with those who are taking this horrific opportunity to threaten world war. For those woman and men now in uniform, you have a choice to make. Silence is what your “superiors” expect of you, but the interests of humanity require more. Think. Speak out. Resist. And if you refuse to fight, there are hundreds of thousands who will support you—many of whom have already taken to the streets to oppose this war.

Like his father before him, Bush Jr. has drawn a line in the sand: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” Simply put, the rulers of the U.S. see much unfinished business for their “New World Order”. While we grieve, they grin that “the normal rules no longer apply” (translation: now is the time to settle our scores), and we have “a blank check to act, the nation is united” (translation: dissent will be ignored, or suppressed as required). Bush Jr. has established a “Czar of Homeland Security” to coordinate domestic government spies, phone taps, and Internet surveillance.