

# SUPPORT OUR TROOPS:

## Bring them home safely now.

**Student Peace Action Network supports the troops by opposing a war.**

**Our hearts go out to the military personnel and families who are suffering enormous strain right now.** Many of us have friends and loved ones in the armed forces, and it is because we care about them that we believe their lives should not be risked when viable alternatives to war remain.

Recently a reservist we know received his orders, and just before reporting for duty, he wrote: "There is no better way to support men and women in uniform than by keeping us out of harm's way. Using us as pawns in a game of global chess is not patriotic and it is not a sign of support. We are counting on you to bring us home and keep the administration accountable for our well-being. Our job is to defend the Constitution, to keep safe 'we the people'; it is not to be exploited as instruments for political or global gain."

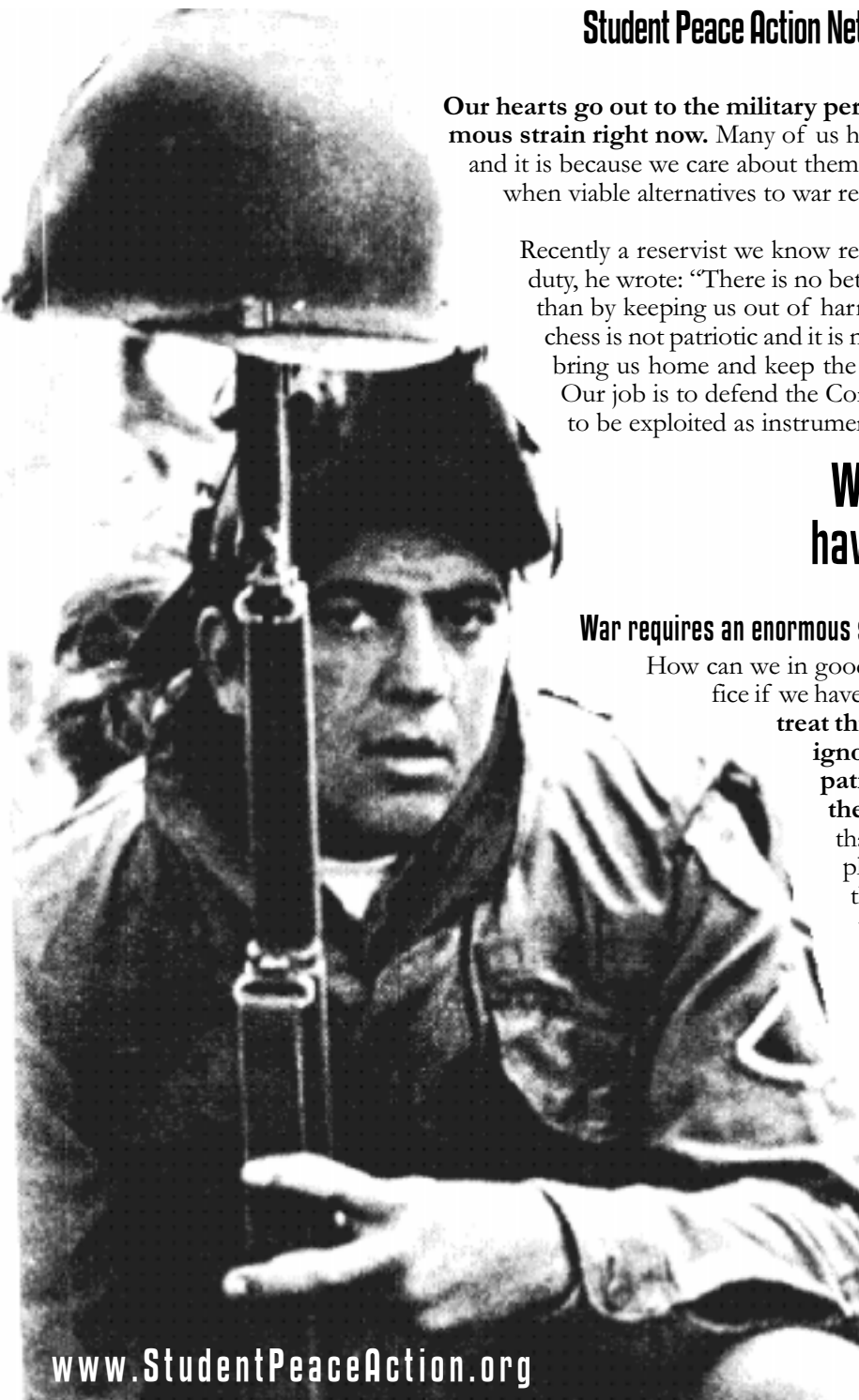
### What does supporting the troops have to do with opposing the war?

**War requires an enormous sacrifice by military personnel and their families.**

How can we in good conscience demand that they make this sacrifice if we have not exhausted all our other options first? **If we treat this war as if it will be an easy excursion, if we ignore peaceful means of resolution out of impatience or rage, we disrespect the difficulty they suffer daily.** And if we fail to fully invest in that process and exhaust all other channels of diplomacy, we deal a blow to every family that faces the emotional and financial hardship of separation from a loved one.

Carol Korreck, mother of a nineteen-year-old soldier, wrote a letter to George W. Bush: "This is my son Tim. You have been referring to him as 'military force.' I want you to be continually mindful of the fact that your 'military force' has a mother and two sisters that want you to value his life as much as we do. Not only do you have the future of our nation to decide, you have my son's future in your hands. War is a last resort. We have not exhausted every other possible means in the fight against terrorism and Saddam Hussein and I don't understand how you will personally justify loss of life if you don't take every other option first."

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## The government hasn't even properly cared for veterans of the first Gulf War.

Many Gulf War veterans have died from or continue to experience nightmarish medical problems (including "Gulf War Syndrome," possibly caused by experimental vaccines and U.S. weaponry containing depleted uranium, among other things). **The Pentagon estimates that 90,000 troops who served in the Gulf War complain of serious symptoms**—yet upon reporting their illness, many have been dismissed as "crazy" or faced enormous obstacles in receiving treatment. (Of those who submitted claims for undiagnosed illnesses, **73 percent have been denied help**, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.) One Gulf War veteran wrote, "It was the choice that I made to spend the rest of my life defending my country and my beliefs; now it's all spent in the hospital, just trying to survive, and I still have to fight the government every day to get the medications that I need."

## Supporting the troops means coming to terms with the reality of what they face, not romanticizing it.

**Veterans for Peace warns:** "We know the consequences of American foreign policy because once, at a time in our lives, so many of us carried it out. We find it sad that war seems so delightful, so often, to those that have no knowledge of it. We will proudly, and patriotically, continue to denounce war despite whatever misguided sense of euphoria supports it."

With language like "surgical strikes" and "collateral damage," **we ignore the reality of what soldiers are really being asked to do.** "Smart bombs" have incinerated even civilian bomb shelters. Many innocent civilians die in war, and **even those soldiers who return uninjured are forced to carry those memories for the rest of their lives.** In the words of 20-year veteran Gary Husted, "You hear the cries and screams, so unearthly you wonder how the person lying next to you could make such a noise, his eyes locked open, his mouth con-



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---Carol Korreck, mother of a 19-year-old soldier, in a letter to George W. Bush

**As of 2001, nearly 10,000 Gulf War vets had died from the illness.** The money that could fund competent medical attention for these veterans is being spent on the drive for yet another war. Where is the "support for the troops" once their fighting potential has been exhausted? Is it morally acceptable to do this to another generation of soldiers?

## Sending human beings into battle is an enormous responsibility to bear.

The administration shirks its responsibility when it fails to acknowledge the real cost and consequences of war—including risks that those pushing for war (George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle) have never had to face. Another veteran from Florida wrote to us recently: "I am a veteran of the Vietnam War Era. I served in the South China Sea in a war zone while George W. Bush was dodging the draft. I am now 55 years old and with age comes the realization that war solves nothing. Nothing. Now at this time in my life the administration expects me to rally behind a war that is likely to light the powder keg that is the Middle East....If my last breath is one of protest to this war then I couldn't die a finer death....You may count me as an avid supporter of any group that advocates an end to this madness."

torted almost beyond recognition....You're left with the knowledge of Kurtz's horror in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, unable to forget what you did and saw, unable to keep it buried...."

## We reach out to servicemen and women with deep respect and hopes for their safety.

As American citizens, it's precisely because we care about America's democratic values that we have to speak out against injustice, and ask ourselves honestly: Will this war really help the people of Iraq, and are we sure enough to bet our loved ones' lives on it? You can still be a patriot—which many of us consider ourselves to be—without agreeing with every action the administration takes, especially in matters as serious as waging a war.

*The image of the peace sign with ribbon comes from*

**BringThemHomeNow.com.**

*More resources are available at*

**VeteransForPeace.org,**

**MFSO.org** (*Military Families*

*Speak Out*), and **GulfWeb.org**

(*Gulf War Veterans Resource*

*Pages*).



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