

# IDAHO PEACE NEWS

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Issue II

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## Winter Soldier describes horrors of occupation

Lara Rozzell — Hailey, Idaho

*"I had my sight on his chest...when I looked at his face, he wasn't a boogeyman, he wasn't the enemy, he was scared and confused, probably the same expression I had on my face at the same time. He was probably fed the same B.S. I was fed, to put myself in that situation."* Hart Vigés, former mortarman, Winter Soldier

Iraq Veterans Against the War sent nine members to testify on Capitol Hill this month. The full Congress is not ready to hear our message – the Progressive Caucus, composed of 72 members of Congress, hosted the hearing.

*"I would like to share with you how one goes about becoming a concentration camp guard without ever having made really any decisions."* Chris Arendt, former Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility guard, Winter Soldier

The Congressional welcome comes in the wake of "Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan," held near Washington, D.C. in March. The event was named for a similar event in 1971 when Vietnam veterans gathered to testify to each other about their experiences from war.

*"I really got disturbed when I realized despite how many Iraqi bodies I had seen... it took someone of my own race and creed and skin color to wake me up out of this kind of slumber"* Logan Laituri, describing his sleepless nights after watching a fellow soldier die under a Humvee, Winter Soldier

I was honored to attend as staff for Winter Soldier with the Idaho Peace Coalition's support. I witnessed an audience of veterans in tears as grieving parents described their veteran son's suicide after the VA refused treatment...Fallujah stories told in hushed tones...a speaker interrupted by a pro-war audience member shouting "Lies, lies!"

*"We destroyed the building...this isn't army to army. People live in towns. It's beyond imagination to think that normal people, civilians, don't live in towns. It's upside down thinking."* Hart Vigés, former mortar man, Winter Soldier

The stories make their way out of these combat veterans in halts, some through tears - Iraqi civilian kills, U.S. soldiers driven mad. They are horrifying, they could be from Vietnam, or from France under German occupation. It's occupation, not war, and it's not winnable by any measure.

*"The longer we live as a human race, we're supposed to be getting smarter, and wiser, and better..."* Domingo Rosas (tearfully), former cavalryman, Winter Soldier

But, something happens in this room besides the developing horror of occupation. In the evenings, we have IVAW debriefs. We break into groups by regions, make plans. Ex-Marines still sporting peach fuzz get excited about keeping other 17-year-olds out of the military. Later into the night appear the folk singers, guitars, satire, and anti-war hip-hop.

*"Twenty-one mental health professionals...that's more than my whole VA has. Man, we can get some counseling this week."* – An unidentified 20-something former soldier

Kelly Dougherty, IVAW Director, sends us forth from Winter Soldier with this thought; "We were raised, she says, to think that someone older or richer or with more education will make sure things are done right. We've learned otherwise. It's up to us."

### Rachel Odio — College of Idaho

ACT (pronounced Act!, Alliance for Community Transformation) has a couple of works in progress:

We have collected some old books from the Boise Public Library to send to a community center library in Cameroon. A College of Idaho student helped set up the community center a few months ago.

We are also in the process of organizing a massive fundraising campaign to fund the Banaa Scholar program at the college. The program arranges for visa, transportation, internships, annual conference, and post-graduation employment for Sudanese students devoted to bringing peace to their country. (see [www.banaa.org](http://www.banaa.org)) The college may help us with partial tuition, but that still leaves us with approximately \$40,000 to fundraise for tuition, fees, books, housing, and food.

**Let's keep in touch! Let's keep the Idaho peace groups communicating and working together. Please submit your news and stories to the Idaho Peace News and "subscribe" for at home delivery! Write Liz at idahopeacecoalition@msn.com. Thank you for your contributions and dedication.**

## Piece of the Pie

**Bonnie Douglas**

*COEUR d'ALENE* - On May 6<sup>th</sup> the North Idaho Coordinator for The Peace Alliance and members of Peace Coeur d'Alene provided the Coeur d'Alene City Council members with apple pies with a sliver of pie removed.

This represents the funding from the discretionary spending budget for the cabinet-level Department of Peace, which is equal to one percent of the annual budget for the Defense Department, exclusive of the current war expenditures.

In addition, a packet of information was presented describing the nationwide movement of city councils passing a resolution in support of the creation of a United States Department of Peace.

On May 9, 2008 the delegation delivered similarly representative apple pies to Senators Craig and Crapo and another to the Women's Center to honor the work they do to prevent Domestic Violence.

The movement, centered near Mother's Day, suggests that Peace deserves a piece of the pie.

Mother's Day was originally created in the 1800's after the Civil War and was called Mother's Day for Peace.

The current legislation before Congress to create a Department of Peace is HR 808.

## A tax day success in Idaho Falls

**United Vision for Idaho — Idaho Falls**

On April 15th, eight people gathered outside Congressman Simpson's office in Idaho Falls to call attention to the ever-increasing war-time spending.

However, after the group had been there for around twenty minutes, the owner of the building, attorney Blake Hall, insisted they leave the property.

This incident not only created five days worth of news in the local media, but it has also caused Congressman Simpson to move his offices!

A spokeswoman for the Congressman stated that he and the building's owner were not able to reach an agreement concerning peaceful demonstrators.

Nevertheless, the Congressman has given his sixty-day notice. Thank you, Congressman Simpson, for being responsive to your constituents.

Senator Mike Crapo, whose offices are in that same building, is also moving, although a spokesperson claims it has nothing to do with this incident.

When Senator Larry Craig's office was contacted, a spokesperson there told the Post-Register that he will remain in that office until his term expires at the end of the year.

Congratulations to Chuck Vogel and all our brothers & sisters in eastern Idaho. Great work!

## Blackwater sets eyes on Coeur d'Alene

Contact Peace Coeur d'Alene, [rdoug@roadrunner.com](mailto:rdoug@roadrunner.com)

Blackwater Worldwide is looking to build a regional law enforcement training center in Coeur d'Alene.

The company is currently working to get a contract with the Idaho Peace Officers Standards and Training Academy to get a facility and to be able to provide instruction to law enforcement personnel.

No timetable has been set, but Blackwater hopes to be using the academy by 2009, but has yet to find a facility in Coeur d'Alene and no costs have been set.

According to the Coeur d'Alene Press, Sheriff Rocky Watson expressed concern about Blackwater and the image it would impose on law enforcement. He said, "The perception that our law enforcement officers will be trained by mercenaries is a problem," Watson said. "Our jobs are totally different. We're not paramilitary. The perception is important to our customers."

This attempt by Blackwater to open a facility in Northern Idaho comes after a failed attempt to open a training facility in San Diego, CA.