



ENLISTING FOR PEACE: A GRASSROOTS RESISTANCE MOVEMENT TAKES ON THE PENTAGON

As the war in Iraq moves into its third year, the U.S. military faces growing opposition both inside and outside its ranks. "Counter-recruiters" are battling the Pentagon in high school cafeterias and on university campuses for the hearts and minds of young people of limited means who overwhelmingly fill the military's ranks. Returning Iraq War veterans and the families of slain soldiers are speaking out in increasing numbers. A steady trickle of soldiers are refusing orders or fleeing to Canada to request asylum. More than 5,000 soldiers have gone AWOL, according to the Pentagon. Each incident is minor and often little-noted, yet forms a part of a larger mosaic of resistance. —JT



Counter-recruiting



Insubordination



Conscientious objectors



Military families speaking out



Direct Action



Mass Action

Camilo Mejia

Former Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia was a platoon leader in Iraq from April to October of 2003 while serving with the Florida National Guard. Deeply disturbed by what he had seen, Mejia, 28, became the first soldier to publicly refuse to return to Iraq. He was court-martialed and sentenced to a year in prison. Before his release last month, he wrote a letter reflecting on his personal odyssey:

People would ask me about my war experiences and answering them took me back to all the horrors — the firefights, the ambushes, the time I saw a young Iraqi dragged by his shoulders through a pool of his own blood or an innocent man was decapitated by our machine gun fire. The time I saw a soldier broken down inside because he killed a child, or an old man on his knees, crying with his arms raised to the sky, perhaps asking God why we had taken the lifeless body of his son.

I commanded an infantry squad in combat and we never failed to accomplish our mission. But those who called me a coward, without knowing it, are also right. I was a coward not for leaving the war, but for having been a part of it in the first place. I failed to fulfill my moral duty as a human being and instead I chose to fulfill my duty as a soldier.

One of the reasons I did not refuse the war from the beginning was that I was afraid of losing my freedom. Today, as I sit behind bars I realize that there are many types of freedom, and that in spite of my confinement I remain free in many important ways. What good is freedom if we are afraid to follow our conscience? What good is freedom if we are not able to live with our own actions? I am confined to a prison but I feel, today more than ever, connected to all humanity. Behind these bars I sit a free man because I listened to a higher power, the voice of my conscience.

<http://www.freecamilo.org>



Military Resistance Links

Coalition Against Militarism in Our Schools
<http://www.militaryfreeschools.org/>

Counter-Recruitment and Alternatives to Military Program (CRAMP)
<http://www.afsc.org/pacificsw/counter-recruitment.htm>

<http://www.projectyano.org/>
Project on Youth and Non-Military Alternatives

Educators to Stop the War
<http://educatorstoptothewar.org>

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO)
<http://www.objector.org/>

Iraq Veterans Against the War
<http://www.ivaw.org>

Veterans for Peace
<http://www.veteransforpeace.org/>

War Resisters League
<http://www.warresisters.org>

Military Families Speak Out
<http://www.mfso.org/>

Citizen Soldier
<http://www.citizen-soldier.org/>

GI Rights Hotline
<http://gights.objector.org/>
800-394-9544

For Breaking News, see
www.counterrecruiter.net

